SECOND NIGHTS ARTHUR RUHL



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SECOND NIGHTS





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PEOPLE AND IDEAS OF THE THEATRE TO-DAY

ът ARTHUR RUHL

Author of "The Other Americans," etc.



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PREFACE

THE first-nighter, as everybody knows, is a bored but witty person, with a black ribbon to his eye-glasses, who descends to his seat just before the curtain rises, and turns to survey the house ere he sits down. In New York, where theatres spring up overnight, he may be the large, red-necked man who supplied the concrete, but he is generally, at any rate, an insider, stirred by many things that pass the outsider by and inclined to be as concerned over the probable size of the audience on the third Tuesday as in the mere pleasure or nourishment to be had from the play. He is both spectator and participant, urging a new ship down the ways, and finds his interest divided perforce between the ship as a ship and the success of the launching. Author and players are waiting behind that closed curtain—be the play never so unimportant, there is mystery and excitement in the air.

The second-nighter breathes a duller ether. Gone is the mystery and contagious warmth, the first night's febrile unrest. The showman has opened his bag of tricks; the pack are off, baying after new game. There is "no one" in the audience. The man in front does not turn round to tell you how the author sat up all the night before rewriting his third act—he is mere "paper," or the brother of the property man's wife, or the sad-eyed subeditor of a technical magazine, or an out-oftown "buyer" drifted in to "The Lady from the Sea," thinking it a musical comedy. The play is better given than on the first night, but it stands on its own feet, is shorn of extraneous glamour. And the second-nighter himself, though he turn up as regular as the clock-and magazine critics are likely to receive tickets for second nights—is scarcely detached from the common herd. He is part of the "public." The news and the spotlight have swung on ere he arrives.

Nor is this without its compensations. If he misses the gossip and excitement, he has a clearer view of the play. If a critic, he is almost too remote and leisurely to be worth

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the showman's time and is left a free agent, to come and go unnoticed in the crowd.

The observations recorded here were made through several years of second nights—a period from 1905 down to the present, of interesting and significant change in the Englishspeaking theatre—in the intervals of other reporting. The "second" night sometimes became the second week or month, and a flood or a prize-fight, a revolution or a political convention, came in between. This, in itself, inclined one toward the general and human rather than severely technical aspect of the stage, and perhaps explains the fact that burlesquers and sombre poets, vaudevillians and fine-spun realists, are lumped together somewhat unceremoniously. The inclination was increased in my own case by the fact that in writing for "Collier's"—where some of these comments originally appeared—one was serving not only the man in the flat overhead and the mythical old lady in Oshkosh for whom all American magazines are edited, but-so we fondly imagined—pioneers in prairie boomtowns and soldiers in tropical isles. The theatre and its people are a side of life, like

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any other, and these chapters present certain impressions and opinions of it which, for one reason or another, shine out of that long and brightly lighted vista of theatre nights, that blur of audiences and of players, with a certain warmth and friendliness, like remembered faces seen in a crowd.

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I

SAMARITANS UNSUNG



SEVENTEEN minutes after three o'clock on a rainy afternoon—a New York rainy afternoon in Sixth Avenue under the elevated! The soggy sky seems to have fallen down about the city like a collapsed tent. The air is a sort of dripping smoke splashed with greenish-yellow blurs from the department-store windows. The gutters are rivers. Cabs, trucks, horses, policemen are locked, grinding and cursing, at every corner. The trolley-cars—jammed with bedraggled humans, dripping, muddy, exhaling steamy odors of rubber and damp leather—jerk forward, only to stop again with brakes that shriek like tortured fiends.

Mr. Everett Shinn would paint you an entrancing picture of such a scene—the bent, hurrying shoppers (one struggling quaintly with an umbrella which an impish gust of wind blows inside out as he comes round the corner), the blown skirts, the drip from everything, the turgid, yellow-greenish, fasci-

nating gloom. It is pleasanter to see such a picture than to be one. Suppose you were one of the crowd—a stranger in the gates, a drummer who has made his rounds, an actor out of a job, one of the army of fagged women emerging from the stifling, soap-scented air of some bargain battle-ground, arms full of parcels, hair awry, trading stamps hopelessly gummed together in her crowded pocket-book.

The exhilaration imparted by the cup of chocolate and the marked-down éclair picked up on the way from the linen department to carpets-rugs-porteers-curtain-rings-an'-curtains is dying, yet dinner is hours away. It is too late for the matinée, yet too early for tea. Behind, the fretful hours of bargaining; in front, the cold and melancholy winter rain—the hopeless, insurmountable rain of the sagging afternoon.

It was with at least vicarious participation in some such state of mind as this that I embarked on a Sixth Avenue train at Eighteenth Street the other day and found myself, a few minutes later, in a balcony box in the Lincoln Square Theatre, agreeably intrenched behind

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two large ladies in white shirt-waists, who genially twisted their chairs and slanted their heads so that I might see. It was the charmed hour for vaudeville—that warm, bright, sachetpowder-and-caramel-scented Lethe from reality and the dripping skies. To the right was a vast array of shirt-waists—punctuated with occasional coats-and faces, eager, smiling, and a little wistful; the faces of those who had come, not merely to look at each other, at the stage a little, and pass the time between an elaborate dinner and an indigestible supper, but as animals huddled together to meet a storm, as humans hungry to be cheered, to laugh and forget in each other's company. On the stage a little lady was doing a turn called "Five Feet of Comic Opera."

The first feeling I had was that of sympathy for Miss Grace Hazard, for, having seen her before and being convinced that she must be in as bad a humor as the rest of us, it seemed that it must be the acutest form of torture to be obliged to repeat that rather simpering, saccharine act over and over again, whether one wanted to or not. Before she left the stage it seemed to me that she ought to

be one of the most contented citizens in the republic.

She is a little lady with a turned-up nose, a wide, cheerful smile, and dainty ways. Her act consists in singing favorite songs from the old comic operas, changing her costume as she changes the song by magically taking something off or turning something inside out, and prefacing each change by telling the audience, in the awestruck singsong of a little girl, something like this:

"Not for the world—would I—deceive,
For here's the coat—right—in—my—sleeve!

Another change before I go.
My! What is this? But a chapeau!"

You should have heard the little breezes of amusement and surprise blow across the audience as each costume, like a thin husk, came off and disclosed another one. Even the basket of flowers which the usher brought up concealed plaids and a Glengarry into which she slipped with a "Great Scott! Well—I'll—be—kilt!" and sang the Merry Miller's song from "Rob Roy." Who knows what happy memories were hidden beneath the murmur

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that went through the house as she stepped into the spot-light and sang: "I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls"!

The tension of the day's clinging sordidness broke as it breaks at the hurdy-gurdy's song or when the man with the little piece of bent tin between his teeth whistles divinely above the roar of the street. All these humans, each enmeshed in his individual chain of circumstance, were for the moment released. They loved the song and they loved the bright little figure with the turned-up nose and wide, cheerful smile—and they loved each other. Miss Hazard may have felt the gloomy weather, too, but, all the same, I think she ought to have been pretty well contented. What she did is not often done even by the solemnest and most pretentious art.

Vaudeville resembles the circus. You like it partly because you never know what is coming next and partly because you not only do know what is coming next, but you know that it will be as exactly like what came last year, or twenty years ago, as one baby or one Christmas is like another. Observe, for instance, Mr. Oswald Williams, the "superb and un-

approachable illusionist," who next appears. You think you are amused because you see through the trick or it is new, because the chest into which he is locked, after being hauled half-way to the ceiling, crumbles up at a pistol-shot into a bit of cloth, while Mr. Magician calmly appears from off stage as if he had never climbed into the chest at all. But what really amuses you and throws you into a sort of trance of peaceful delight is the way he sprints about in his soft-treading, patent-leather pumps, with short, quick steps, as if he were a biograph picture, and taps things with his wand and smiles his uncanny smile and goes right on fooling you exactly as magicians have always done and as it would shock and distress you not to have them do.

It is the same with the Two Romanos who follow and play trumpets in all sorts of extraordinary ways, Mr. Romano actually putting two horns to his mouth at once and playing the air on one and the alto on another with the same split breath! That's all very well as far as it goes, but the really wonderful thing is the absolutely unhuman and manikin-like smile which—as all such performers have done

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before them—they succeed in putting on their muscular and much-practised lips as they wet them preparatory to each toot, and the look of apathy and even semiasphyxiation which the athletic Mr. Romano is able to assume while playing alone, even though Mrs. Romano, by way of assisting the audience to appreciate his skill, is regarding him with awestruck interest and enthusiasm.

And is it not the same with the equilibrists and tumblers?—so much so, indeed, that when Mr. George Spink introduces a parody of them in his musical sketch, "At the Country Club"—I believe we are at the Colonial now—you are ready to fall off your chair with delight, although he and the other man and the athletic-looking lady who helps them do nothing but say "Hup!" and walk with quick little steps and wave gracefully to the galleries and never turn any somersaults at all!

To a class depending more on individuality belong the monologue artists—Mr. Jim Thornton, for instance, and Mr. James Morton, the man who answers his own questions. Each has his peculiar knack, and it is often hard to analyze why some are funny and some are not, but it is safe to assume that the more solemn they appear the more amusing they are going to be. What more refreshing, after spinning intellectual cobwebs or trying to extract nourishment from some sawdust-stuffed "society" play, than to watch one of these gloomy gentlemen tramp down to the footlights in a buttoned-up frock coat, look straight at the balcony rail, and, with severe lines drawn about his mouth and an undertaker's voice, chant:

"The waitress says to me: 'What'll you

have-beefsteak or coffee?' H'm!

"I says: 'Haven't you got anything else?'

"Well, she brought me a plate of consommé. She set it down on the table and she says: 'It looks like rain, doesn't it?'

"It does,' I says, 'and it tastes like it, too.'

H'm!

"I was playing one-night stands with an 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' troupe out in Ohio. We had a fine company—a fine company. We carried a full band. We had to carry it—they were full all the time. H'm!

"The public didn't seem to appreciate the show, though. Finally, one night, we had to call the performance off. The hounds refused

Samaritans Unsung

to go on. They complained because the actors had eat up all their meat . . ." He finds it hard to get away. The audience calls him back again and again. Finally he stalks in in time to a solemn march, turns about, and stalks solemnly out—or is it the man-who-answers-his-own-questions who does that?—and the crowd laughs louder than ever.

There are people who become interesting on the vaudeville stage because of what they have done off it. As this is being written, you may see Miss Mabel Hite berate Mr. Mike Donlin for striking out, just as contemporary tradition declares occasionally happens in the Donlin home circle when the distinguished right-fielder is off his game. The Fitzsimmonses are visible, too, and you can see Mr. Bob Fitzsimmons punching-no, not Mrs. Fitzsimmons, but a bag—in something called "A Man's a Man for a' That." And possibly you can see, although I hope you cannot, Mr. John J. Hayes advertising a pair of rubber heels and telling how he won the Marathon race. Perhaps he only consents to wear the heels in the newspaper advertisements. Nobody enjoys seeing our young athletes turn professionals,

but it certainly would be harrowing to see so accomplished an athlete as Hayes running on his heels.

The American Theatre turned the other day from the depiction of the eternal struggle between beautiful cloak models and gentlemen with black mustaches to vaudeville, and the manager celebrated the event by honoring me with two aisle seats. To this happy chance I owe my first sight of Barnold's Dogs, although I understand that the experience cannot be viewed as a discovery.

The curtain rises on a miniature city street. There is a saloon, a policeman's signal-box, a police station, and other things. The trainer does not appear at all, and the dogs, dressed to represent various sorts of humans, march in on their hind legs and go about their business, especially that of patronizing the barroom, as if no one else were there. You should see the old lounger sitting up on his haunches beside the door, see him eye each newcomer inquiringly, then, with the drollest look imaginable, follow him in, emerge, presently, licking his chops with satisfaction, and again take his place to wait for the next victim. And

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especially you should see the astonishing animal who imitates a too-genial citizen. With unrepentant grin he starts across the street, zigzags uproariously, even falls and laboriously picks himself up, and finally, after several wild and incredibly human attempts, makes the lamp-post on the other side and clings to it. Then the monkey policeman comes along, turns in the alarm, the patrol-wagon drives up, clanging, and the unhappy bacchanalian is haled to the station-house.

Imitations of drunken men are not, perhaps, the pleasantest things in the world, but this gifted animal performs his part with such reality, and he looks round toward the audience, panting, with such contagious good humor; he is, indeed, such—if Mr. John Burroughs will permit me to say so—an artist, that I think you not only would not be repelled, but would applaud with the rest and might almost want to invite Mr. Barnold's comedian out to dinner.

But what—however fancy may roam, the body is still ensconced in the upper left-hand box at the Lincoln Square—what are these unusual sounds from the orchestra? This thumping, marching rhythm, with a wailing,

windy accompaniment, as it were, supporting it and blowing it along? What but an orchestral adaptation of bagpipe music and—at last, at last! It's Harry Lauder! In he ambles, that quaint, bow-legged figure, with the big, rugged, comic face, in kilts and low cavalry boots, which he taps with a riding-whip as he stumps along.

Our ears are so accustomed to syncopated time that this swinging, singsong rhythm seems altogether new and delightful. That part of Lauder's charm lies in this music was proved to me at the American by a sketch called "Breaking Into Society," in which one of the Four Mortons, in a hussar's uniform and beating a drum, marches back and forth along the footlights to just such time. And, although she didn't pretend to any of Mr. Lauder's art, you could watch that facile step, the knee bending a bit each time, till the cows come home. And the Scotch burr is comic in itself to American ears, and, also, Mr. Lauder is an artist in his way as Chevalier is in his.

The audience, that rainy afternoon, miles away from gloom by this time, warm, cheerful, and beaming from ear to ear with the con-

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tagion of a common enjoyment, leaned forward and clapped rapturously and would have listened forever. The canny Scot declared at last, however, that it was tea time for him, and away he stumped. And out poured the crowd into the city again, the glistening, wet city, now warm and cheerful with the evening lights. The "L" trains were pouring northward, the trolley-cars, crowded with folks going home to dinner, crept close on each other's heels. And the misty rain, suffused with the glow from millions of lamps, enveloped, drew about the town, softening its countenance and wrapping the streets in a new intimacy and seclusion.

They had dissipated—(the word means thrown away, and in cold blood, out of all the world's possibilities, to choose a variety show for a clear, frosty winter evening might be throwing it away)—they had dissipated the little crust of individual habit, care, and worry which so easily hardens around those who live, in these noisy canyons of stone and steel, their isolated and specialized lives. Their spirits were free again to share and merge with those about them.

"—And I'm we-ee-ary—
For my de-ee-arie—
I'd rather lose my whup than
lose my da-aisy!"

they hummed as they poured out of the theatre and were swallowed up by the town.

December, 1908.



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MR. SHAW REVISITED



Our old friend, the theatrical band-wagon, not without some creaks in his joints, with bits of his new gingerbread cracking and tumbling down on the cobblestones, is coming down the street again. How the people, all fresh from their summers in the country, crowd round, glad to see the lights and hear the old tunes played again! Let's down into the street with them and see what we can see. In front, right up with the driver, we discern the lean, restless countenance of Mr. G. Bernard Shaw. What a busy and amusing person it is! With one hand he explodes firecrackers and sends up skyrockets, trailing long tails of brightest sparks-Whis-s-sh!-into the air. They burst up there, and little balloons go trailing away with strange mottoes on them. From the ground they are a bit hard to read, but some of them look like "2+2=5," "Hate Your Neighbors," "Dishonor Your Parents," "Whatever You Are Be Queer," and the like. Few of the crowd try to make them out, but they laugh at the bright colors and clap their hands. In his other hand Mr. Shaw holds a big slap-stick. With this he reaches out and whacks the people in the crowd-wherever a head shows-because he is clever with his slap-stick and wants you to know it. Sometimes he catches shifty folks before they can dodge

—see old Pecksniff's top-hat go tumbling into the gutter and hear the crowd roar—but quite as often he comes down—Slap!—on the young, unsuspecting ones, so pleased with their dreams and enthusiasms, and what they call their ideals, that they never think to get out of the way. Watch him catch that young girl, crowding up the rest, laughing and breathless, on the arm of her young man.

"He thinks you're a divinity now," shouts Mr. Shaw, "but if he marries you, in a month you won't have any more divinity for him than a muffin!"

"Then you mean to say he'll get tired of me?" gasps the young girl, tears springing into her eyes.

"No, not at all!" returns Mr. Shaw, with a burst of his queer, sardonic laughter, "one doesn't get tired of muffins!"

Of course, a slap-stick does not hurt much, but isn't it odd for a grown-up man to like so much to whack those whom he can whack so easily? Some of the crowd seem to think so, anyway, and they are pushing up, shouting: "Throw him out of the band-wagon!" But the fellows sitting up on the high stools wave their arms frantically and tell everybody to hush up and keep still. These, it seems, are the critics—the men on the high stools.

"Ssh!" they cry. "Never mind what Shaw does! Don't take him seriously, because that's just what he likes; besides, it will make people think you come from Galesburg or Kansas City!"

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But the band-wagon passes on and our frightened maiden dries her eyes, "Oh, look!" she cries, for down the street another top-hat has gone bumpety-bump into the gutter. "After all, he's a very funny man and almost the only one in the band-wagon with any life."

"I'd like to get hold of him," says the young man. "I'd show him!" But the girl only laughs—now quite

merrily.

"Oh, never mind," says she, "it didn't hurt, really." She is a faith curist, you see, and if you only have faith, folks like Mr. Shaw can whack you over the head as hard as ever they want to, and it doesn't hurt.

THESE words, written in the dark backward and abysm of 1905, when Ibsen was still regarded as a rather horrible old gentleman growing toadstools in a cellar and the younger English realists had not been heard of, express a feeling rather common to American audiences when first they saw Mr. Shaw's plays—perhaps one should say when first his plays saw them.

I well recall that busy New York noon, the Childs Restaurant on Sixth Avenue just above Fourteenth Street. Undimmed return the two fat ladies opposite, in slightly wilted white shirt-waists, munching butter cakes;

the afternoon paper propped against the sugar bowl; the steady clatter of dishes; the gnawing distress of mind. "Man and Superman" had just appeared, and it devolved on a dramatic reporter to say something about it.

Now, it is not difficult to say something about the ordinary play. The spectator feels that if he took a day off he could write a better one, or at least that he knows where the author made his mistakes. He watches the playwright as he watches a man walk a tight rope. He couldn't do it himself, perhaps, but he knows how it ought to be done.

This restful pose, however, was precisely what Mr. Shaw would not permit. What the audience thought of him appeared the least of his troubles, so absorbed was he in making clear how little he thought of them. He followed the rule of street fighting and knocked the other man down first. He tangled us up in dialectic nets and shot our pet ideas full of holes, and we were as ready to reply as to argue with a repeating rifle.

Such was the painful situation that day in the restaurant, when suddenly, through the humid air, fragrant of coffee and toast and

Mr. Shaw Revisited

browning griddle-cakes, Mr. Shaw and his band-wagon appeared, and the pleasures of reporting replaced the more laborious task of making up one's mind.

Nearly everybody in those days was made uneasy by Mr. Shaw—theirs the same defensive attitude, a similar plaintive note. They were used to "letting themselves go" in the theatre, and they found that with him they never could let themselves go. They must always be ready to dodge. They were used to catching the author's meaning—not a violent chase, generally—but they couldn't catch Mr. Shaw. He was an electric eel, with a very high intellectual voltage, watching for a chance to sting his pursuers, leave them gasping and vaguely hurt.

Glancing recently, for the first time in several years, into one of Mr. Shaw's plays, I was surprised to find how harmless and well-meaning he had become. His brilliance had not tarnished in the interval—compared with this fancy skater, most of the other wits of the day seem to be shuffling about in their goloshes—but it was less clear that he was solely bent on our embarrassment and undo-

ing. I was curious enough to read through the other plays and prefaces—in several cases the first time I had taken the trouble to find out what he actually said instead of taking him for granted—and the impression was but deepened. It even appeared doubtful if, in spite of his fondness for beating the big drum, he ever made an assertion—even that he was better than Shakespeare—that, in the sense he intended it, he could not back up.

The discovery is not, I fear, a dazzling one, but one is tempted to enlarge on it a little here if but to continue an inspection interrupted that day in the restaurant and make a trifle clearer the shrieks of anguish that used to fill the air.

Looking back at Mr. Shaw in the light of some of our own journalistic phenomena, one might almost call him the first of the "muckrakers." Before the magazine critics began to attack specific local abuses, he was a kind of muck-raker at large, out against the pillars of society. The world has changed a good deal since Mr. Shaw's plays first appeared—we are all, so to speak, iconoclasts now, and any sweet girl graduate can lisp things about rich

men, reactionary politicians, and the uneven distribution of justice which would have been regarded as anarchistic in 1892. Mr. Shaw was a pioneer, for one thing—incredibly keen, clear-headed, suspicious of humbug, as much an alien in England as any witty Frenchman, and ready to hit any head in sight.

He had a curious clear-sightedness, unclouded by most of the mists of sentiment and sense which envelop the ordinary person, and a fierce objection to being so enveloped. He must always know just where he was at. Imagine him, to take an obvious example, in the front row at a Broadway musical comedy alongside one of our famous, tired business men. The Sixteen Beautiful Milliners, shipwrecked on a desert isle, are about to be marched off to the harem of the local Bluebeard, when the timely arrival of a United States war-ship transfers them to the gallant arms of chorus-gentlemen marines.

The audience, who wish they were marines, are permitted vicariously to become such whilst a tropical moon hitches up the back drop. In its melting light the exiled Americans sing "Home, Sweet Home," then the

band swings into a ragtime medley of patriotic airs, and the curtain goes down with the limelight sizzling on a waving American flag and the well-powdered arms of the Sixteen Milliners, with a few of the audience rising awkwardly as "The Star-Spangled Banner" is played.

The weary Titan of finance, fatigued as one is who has ridden to and from an office in a well-padded limousine, smoked a dozen fiftycent cigars, eaten a heavy luncheon, a still heavier dinner, and taken no exercise, decides that life is beginning to look up and applauds energetically for another sight of the flag and the lovely milliners. Mr. Shaw, on the other hand, is beside himself. It is not, as he would explain, that he objects to vulgarity. Falstaff or Doll Tearsheet do not bother him in the least. What infuriates him is this mixing of show girls and patriotism. It represents a muddled thinking which offends his taste. His logical mind demands everything in its place, while in most of the audience's minds things are all over the place. He wants to get rid of the flag or rid of the girls. And to hear him go at it, you might think to get rid of

Mr. Shaw Revisited

the girls he would get rid of patriotism itself.

Mr. Shaw, as he reveals amusingly in his prefaces, had aggravated his natural austerity by nearly asphyxiating himself in art and the talk of it. Any one who has been put through a course of studio teas will know what this means. Mr. Shaw had kept at it for years, writing musical, literary, and dramatic criticism, stuffing his senses until, as he expressed it, he sank like a baby fed on starch. Like a man who had been restricted to an exclusive diet of cream puffs, he was completely and irrevocably against cream puffs, i. e., against anything soft, pretty, romantic—all the pleasant mists of make-believe with which people hide themselves from reality. He wanted to bite tenpenny nails or, like his own Mr. Crampton in "You Never Can Tell," crack nuts with his teeth to strengthen his character.

If somebody had shanghaied Mr. Shaw and compelled him to serve before the mast for a couple of years, live on hardtack and salt-horse, and furl sails barehanded in zero weather, he might have got over some of his fierceness against pretty things. Nobody did so, and in his own reaction from creampuffery he seemed to see thousands of people pleasantly drugging themselves on sentimental concerts, sermons, and fiction in order to forget overcrowded tenements, poverty, disease, crime, and the things that should have worried them.

"Paper apostles and artist magicians," he snorted, anathematizing the whole race of artists, "who have succeeded in giving cowards all the sensations of heroes whilst they tolerate every abomination. . . . The pleasures of the senses I can sympathize with and share, but the substitution of sensuous ecstasy for intellectuality and honesty is the very devil."

There was another side to this strange clear-headedness of Mr. Shaw's—his ability to work out everything in our complex world in a perfectly "natural," rational way, as if he had just stepped off an aeroplane from Mars, an intensely keen, witty person who knew nothing of our curious inherited prejudices and conventions.

Now, of course, the world we actually live in is not in the least "natural" or "rational."

Mr. Shaw Revisited

There is nothing rational nor beautiful about the woollen pipes in which the modern man encases his legs nor in a "bowler" hat; yet when Mr. Raymond Duncan ventured to appear bareheaded in New York, in a rather beautiful and thoroughly rational Greek costume, the Broadway policeman, symbol of thoroughly irrational authority, promptly—and with the loud approval of press and public—clapped him into jail. If looks were spears the man who tried to walk up Fifth Avenue in a comfortable pair of white "sneakers" would die a thousand deaths ere he had strolled a dozen blocks.

There is generally a reason for these apparent unreasons, but it is not always to be found on the surface, and a clever man, merely by looking at things in this perfectly "natural" way, arrives at astonishing conclusions—paradoxes, as they are called—which hurt and bewilder yet cannot, at the moment, be answered.

"Twelve lawful children," says Mr. Shaw in his rational way, "borne by one highly respectable lady to three different fathers is not impossible nor condemned by public opinion. That such a lady may be more law-abiding than the poor girl whom we used to spurn into the gutter for bearing one unlawful infant is no doubt true; but dare you say she is less self-indulgent?"

"She is less virtuous," you reply stoutly;

"that is enough for me."

"In that case," Mr. Shaw demands, "what is virtue but the trade-unionism of the married?"

Answers to such knocks may doubtless be found next morning, but in the theatre they follow one another too rapidly, and when morning comes it is easier to hurry off to one's office, assuming that the playwright was an impudent crank, than it is to read all that he wrote, and the preface before the play, and to learn, perhaps, that he was overstating a truth in order to get people to look at it, just as a politician who wants a loaf sometimes gets a slice by calling his opponents murderers and bandits, when, if he were charitable, he might never be heard at all.

The "rational," man-from-Mars argument is not always a fair one, yet it is often used with good effect by reformers, trying, as Mr.

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Shaw was trying, to attract attention and wake people up to the fact that some of their popular notions make them do foolish and wicked things. Duelling, for instance, used to be such a general and fashionable idea, and it was made unpopular by exactly Mr. Shaw's kind of argument—by stripping it of romance and making people feel that there was nothing fine in two men squaring off and trying to murder one another.

People who believe that war is wicked and absurd often use the "natural" argument against it, and a thinker like Tolstoi will talk as if he were seeing soldiers for the first time and knew nothing of the ideas they stood for; as if one national flag was but a piece of bunting like another; and make it appear ridiculous that a hundred thousand men with blue eyes, who love life and their families, should try to murder a hundred thousand other men with black eyes, who also love life and their families, merely because they disagree about an imaginary line.

It is an effective kind of argument because it gets people off their high horses and down to earth, and it is also an unsound kind of argument in so far as the high horses are necessary and worth while. Of course, people can no more get along without romance than they can get along without bread and shoes, and yet there is so much fake romance that undoubtedly it is a good thing for an idol smasher like Mr. Shaw to come along now and then and clear the air. And the London theatres of the early nineties were likely places to start on.

There was much less chance then of finding plays that seemed to discuss, interpret, or make interesting the vital things in people's every-day lives. The younger English realists had yet to appear, while the same critics who would blandly swallow the furtive vulgarity of musical comedy foamed at the mouth at the recently translated Ibsen plays, as if the grim old Norwegian had stolen their silver or run off with their wives.

Their ravings seem almost incredible now, and it is scarcely to be wondered at if Mr. Shaw felt that "the actor's main business is the voluptuous soothing of the tired city speculator when he is through with what he calls the serious business of the day. To them

such phrases as impassioned poetry or passionate love of truth have fallen out of their vocabulary. To them passion, the life of the drama, means nothing but primitive excitement."

Pinero was on the tip of the wave and a far more accomplished playwright than Mr. Shaw was ever to become, yet he was a man of the theatre rather than a thinker, and to this high-voltage radical must have seemed almost as abreast of the times as a leading gentleman in musical comedy seems to the leader of a settlement house. More creampuffery, or so it doubtless seemed to Mr. Shaw, and he set out to write a new kind of play-plays that should bring into the theatre things in the air intelligent people were breathing, that spoke their language and would make them sit up and take notice of things he thought it high time they were noticing.

These were many, chief among them the falsity and foolishness of "romance"—of masking in pleasant general ideas, that is to say, life's actual facts. Ibsen had already set the fashion of attacking ideals to which the

individual enslaved himself and Mr. Shaw took up the same game in his lighter and more pyrotechnic way. Here, in "Arms and the Man," one of his earlier plays, we find him charging at militarism and the military ideal. His method was somewhat that of Cervantes when the latter showed how absurd the romantic conventions of chivalry became when persisted in in a world which had outgrown them, except that in the Shaw farce it was the soldier who was completely matter-of-fact and rational and the Bulgarians, amongst whom he found himself, whose romantic notions of war were laughed at.

Bluntschli fought for his pay envelope like any office hack, and as for not fearing death, he cheerfully admitted that all good soldiers feared it very much, because it was a soldier's duty to live as long as he could and kill as many of the enemy as possible. When the young Bulgarian lady started to idealize the man who led a cavalry charge as "the bravest of the brave," Bluntschli only grinned and explained that, as a matter of fact, the man's horse was running away with him. When the lady's parents, trying in their mediæval

way to impress Bluntschli with the style of living she had been accustomed to, mention their twenty-four horses, the Swiss replies that he himself has seventy.

"I have nine thousand six hundred pairs of sheets and blankets, with two thousand four hundred eiderdown quilts. I have ten thousand knives and forks and the same quantity of dessert-spoons. I have six hundred servants. I have six palatial establishments, besides two livery-stables, a tea-garden, and a private house . . ."

"Are you Emperor of Switzerland?" asks the pompous Petkoff. Bluntschli explained

that he kept a hotel.

In "The Devil's Disciple," when General Burgoyne is asked to spare the life of one of his prisoners, he replies: "Martyrdom is what these people like. It is the only way in which a man can become famous without ability." When his prisoner, following the custom of spirited captives in fiction, demands that he be shot like a man instead of hung like a dog, Burgoyne answers sympathetically: "Now, there, Mr. Anderson, you talk like a civilian, if you will excuse my saying so. Have you

any idea of the marksmanship of the army of his Majesty, King George the Third? If we make up a firing party, what will happen? Half of them will miss you; the rest will make a mess of the business and leave you to the provo-marshal's pistol. Whereas we can hang you in a perfectly workmanlike and agreeable way. Let me persuade you to be hanged, Mr. Anderson."

Mr. Shaw has a wonderful gift for this sort of thing—for taking posers unawares joggling people out of their attitudes, pouncing on the strongest thing that can be said on the "wrong" side of a question and promptly saying it with such wit and force that it seems for the moment unanswerable.

He is never more amusing than in his attacks on art and artists, for here we are getting an insider's point of view—the sarcasm of a man, himself an artist, yet sane and vigorous enough to see the weaknesses of his own kind and to jump on them unmercifully.

What could be quainter and more unexpected—at least to a generation which has forgotten Gilbert—than such a scene as that in "Antony and Cleopatra," where Apollodorus,

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"a dashing young man of about twenty-four, dressed with deliberate estheticism in the most delicate purples and dove grays," is stopped on his way to Cleopatra with some beautiful carpets by the matter-of-fact Roman Sentinel:

SENTINEL (not at all impressed, pointing to the carpets): And what is all this truck?

APOLLODORUS: Carpets for the furnishing of the Queen's apartments. I have picked them from the best carpets in the world; and the Queen shall choose the best of my choosing.

SENTINEL: So you are a carpet merchant?

APOLLODORUS (hurt): My friend, I am a Patrician.

SENTINEL: A Patrician! A Patrician keeping a shop instead of following arms!

APOLLODORUS: I do not keep a shop. Mine is a temple of the arts. I am a worshipper of beauty. My calling is to choose beautiful things for beautiful Queens. My motto is Art for Art's Sake.

SENTINEL: That is not the password.

APOLLODORUS: It is a universal password.

Sentinel: I know nothing about universal passwords. Either give me the password for the day or get back to your shop.

Part of the fun of this comes, of course, from the surprise of finding an ancient Roman talking like a sub-art-editor at a studio tea, or the

sort of young man who loves to help middleaged society ladies, whose husbands are busy down-town, arrange the details of Colonial balls or pageants at the Plaza. But the real surprise is to meet this kind of satire in the theatre at all. Just as Kipling once surprised the ordinary man by showing that literature belonged to him, with his ships, machinery, and day's work, and wasn't monopolized by long-haired gentlemen in velvet coats, so Mr. Shaw similarly surprised and delighted by showing how easy it was to play quite comfortably in the theatre with ideas generally thought to be the property of literary critics or philosophers. He made a sort of intellectual farce almost fashionable-or, at any rate, he would have done so if more playwriters were well-read and witty enough to follow his lead.

In all his hooting at the æsthetic pose, he amusingly takes sides with the every-day man. "I know there are men," says he, "who, having nothing to say and nothing to write, are nevertheless so in love with oratory and literature, that they keep desperately repeating as much as they can understand of what others

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have said or written aforetime. I know that the leisurely tricks which their want of conviction leaves them free to play with the diluted and misapprehended message, supply them with a pleasant parlor game which they call style."

The artistic pose is not as fashionable as it was when Mr. Shaw first came to London—although here in America the absorption of most of the first-rate men in business often encourages the sixth-rate man who writes or paints or plays the piano to bask in a glamour he could not hold for a week were competition as keen in his as in other fields—but there is still enough to go round.

And just as it amuses and relieves us from our cramped attitudes of adoration to be told that the cavalry hero's horse was running away, so we are similarly relieved after our long praise of the artist's sacrifice of everything for his art, to hear Mr. Shaw—himself one of them—fling back: "Yes—the true artist will let his wife starve, his children go barefoot, his mother drudge for his living at seventy, rather than work at anything but his art. To women he is half-vivisector, half-vam-

pire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing they have the power to make him see visions and dream dreams, inspire him as he calls it. He steals the mother's milk and blackens it to make printer's ink to scoff at her and glorify ideal woman with. Perish the race and wither a thousand women if only the sacrifice of them will enable him to act Hamlet better, to paint a finer picture, to write a deeper poem, a greater play, a deeper philosophy."

This may be overaccenting the "wrong" side of the matter, yet once we have learned the trick of it—learned, that is to say, that the "villain" of the Shavian drama is not the ordinary cutthroat but the "wrong side," so to speak, of the conventional hero—there is a tonic flavor in the bitterness and we feel that same stimulating sense of "standing up to the facts" we get so often with Mr. Shaw.

It was because they had not learned this trick that his earlier audiences were shocked and hurt and often dismissed him as "soulless"—I have a dim recollection of having

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done so myself—when they could think of nothing worse to say.

The treatment of Praed in "Mrs. Warren's Profession" is characteristic. In real life, as viewed by most of Mr. Shaw's audiences, Praed would be reckoned a desirable and rather charming person—gentlemanlike and appreciative, with a gently chivalrous turn—the sort of youngish middle-aged man who has nice books and pictures at home and likes to hunt up quaint places abroad. The ordinary novelist or playwright would treat him with every consideration—in Mr. Shaw's play he becomes a sort of stained-glass joke, an æolian humbug—the acid fairly burns the paper every time Mr. Shaw gives him a line.

It is after the audience and Vivie have learned the true nature of her mother's profession that this fluty sentimentalist saunters in to urge Vivie to cross over to the Continent and "saturate herself with beauty and romance." Vivie, quivering still at the revelation of the source of her mother's income, answers that there is no beauty and no romance in life for her. Life is what it is and she is prepared to face it.

"You will not say that," persists Praed, "if you come to Verona and on to Venice. You will cry with delight at living in such a beautiful world. Oh, I assure you I have cried—I shall cry again, I hope—at fifty! At your age, Miss Warren, you would not need to go as far as Verona. Your spirits would fly up at the mere sight of Ostend. You would be charmed with the gayety, the happy air of Brussels." . . . One of Mrs. Warren's establishments was in Brussels.

This cruel and unusual treatment of a cultured gentleman puzzled and dismayed the unsuspecting spectators. It seemed as if their own better nature were being attacked—they did not grasp that in his savage thirst to sweep away the sentimentalities with which nice people drape unpleasant facts he appeared to be trying to smash the nice people themselves.

In the decade since Mr. Shaw's plays first began to stir things up we have grown used to this trick and rather to like it. The stage is always a good deal behind life—it has merely been a matter of catching partly up.

There was surely enough contrast, for instance, between the thinking, capable, En-

glish or American woman of the day and the sort of tame white rabbit she is often assumed to be in novels and plays, to justify such a farce as "Man and Superman." That woman is always the pursuer and man the pursued, and in the fulfilling of her task of perpetuating the race she devours the casual masculine means to this end as relentlessly as the tigress licks up a mutton chop, is no more than the farcical overaccenting of a truth for the purpose of driving it home.

Poor moonstruck little Tavy in the play, regarding himself as the protector of Ann, a woman with ten times his vitality, intelligence, and sense of humor, is matched in real life every day by the sort of vast, fatuous, self-important male who, in spite of being managed, supplied with ideas, and sent down to his office every morning by his wife like a boy to school—refers to the other side of his household as "the little wife."

Mr. Shaw doubtless had no more intention of waking up the night after his play was produced and finding the universe engaged in general hare-and-hound chase, with the gentler sex yelping in pursuit of the wild-eyed males,

than he had of denying woman's share in making the world go round, when Tanner advises Octavius, after the latter's wail that he can't write without inspiration and nobody can give it to him but Ann, "Well, hadn't you better get it from her at a safe distance? Petrarch didn't see half as much of Laura, nor Dante of Beatrice, as you see of Ann now, and yet they wrote first-rate poetry—at least, so I am told."

He was writing satire, making points where he could, and he found a hole in the armor here. Indeed, if we take the trouble to read his preface we find our Desperate Desmond saying almost diffidently: "I plank down my view of the existing relation of man to woman in the most highly civilized society for what it is worth. It is a view like any other view, and no more; neither true nor false, but I hope a way of looking at the subject which throws into the familiar order of cause and effect a sufficient body of fact and experience to be interesting."

With all their quick jabs, there was something very jolly and stirring in the first effect of his plays—when has the theatre seemed so live and indispensable a place as when "Man and Superman" and "You Never Can Tell" first appeared?—a feeling of being somehow rejuvenated and released, the feeling which makes all revolution popular. Down with the bigwigs—we've been burning incense to them too long! Overboard with these tyrannical conventions which keep us from acting according to our own wills and common sense. We'll "stand up to the facts" and be captains of our souls.

As drama, his plays are not important. Stripped of their witty lines, which often might as well be delivered by one person as another, and their quaint characterization, which often consists in putting Mr. Shaw's sophisticated ideas in the mouth of some one who in actual life would never have had them—stripped, in short, of the things which might have come from a novelist or satirical essayist as well as from a playwright, not much is left. And, of course, Mr. Shaw frankly admits this, and with characteristic cheerfulness assures us that all his apparently novel situations are borrowed from the theatrical rag-bag.

It is also true that all these anti-idealists and individualists, Mr. Shaw as well as the

very different Ibsen, in doing away with conventional ideas would do away with a lot of labor-saving machinery which society has perfected to make easier the business of living. A "bowler" hat or a hobble-skirt may be absurd, yet if a hundred million Americans each had to work out a rational dress before going down-town in the morning life would be immensely more complicated. And, of course, this would be even more true in the region of morals if we had to act as if each case were new and unique and stop and figure out each time whether we really ought to take the diamond necklace without paying for it, or run away with the other man's wife, or shoot the actor who bores us.

It is also true that men with highly active, vigorous minds like Mr. Shaw's, accustomed to working with ideas instead of more or less tiresome material things, forget or do not understand the average man's need of the romantic illusions which seem to him so cheap and irrational. The intense patriotism, for instance, of some prairie "boom" town—the quite absurd notion that it is the best town, in the best county, in the best State, in the best of all pos-

sible countries—gives its ordinary citizens the stimulus they need to make it, if not the best, at least a good deal better than it might otherwise be. There is something in human nature which demands these radiant fancy pictures. We will have our cavalry hero whether or no his horse is running away with him.

On the other hand, of course, ideals must be kept brushed up, and now and then changed for new ones. They quickly become dusty. It is here that iconoclasts are useful. Mr. Shaw brought a lot of new ideas into the theatre—"no doubt I seem prodigiously clever to those who have never hopped hungry and curious across the fields of philosophy, politics, and art"—and if his smashing statements of what's what do not always seem, later on, to be so true, at least he woke people up.

No doubt he talks now and then just to hear himself talk, because he does it so well. The amusing but rather ridiculous comments he occasionally makes in the newspapers on happenings in America suggest a tendency which he may be following at other times, when, because of the unfamiliarity of the material in hand, the weak points in his argument

are not so apparent. Yet when he made Don Juan say, in "Man and Superman," that "as long as he could conceive of something better than himself, he couldn't be easy unless he was striving to bring it into existence or clear the way for it," he was undoubtedly describing his own state of mind. One cannot imagine Mr. Shaw taking his work frivolously enough merely to write what "the public wants" although he is clever enough to write any kind of thing whatsoever. He is always lambasting the public rather than truckling to it, keeping himself up to the scratch, and looking for desirable trouble.

His cheerfulness and vim cannot be escaped. He is always in training and fit, never depressed nor depressing. There is more hopefulness in the bitterest of his attacks than in most people's mealy optimism, and it might well be more stimulating to be told, in his way, to wear out, cast one's self on the scrap-heap and let one's eternal life take care of itself, than to listen to more namby-pamby philosophers' assurances of immortality.

This ability to take care of himself often reduces his habit of blowing his own horn to a

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not unlikable mannerism. We don't so much mind bluffing if, as we say, one "can get away with it."

Prefaces he wrote because he *could* write them. "The reason most dramatists do not publish their plays with prefaces is that they cannot write them, the business of intellectually conscious philosopher and skilled critic being no part of the playwright's craft"—and that was true.

"I have no disabilities to plead. Produce me your best critic and I will criticise his head off"-and that was true, too. And in "Fanny's First Play" Mr. Shaw stood them up in a row and punctured them like toy balloons. Some one suggesting that his noisy methods are those of a charlatan, Mr. Shaw at once agrees. "I am well aware that the ordinary British citizen requires a profession of sham from all mountebanks by way of homage to the sanctity of the ignoble private life to which he is condemned by his incapacity for public life. . . . I leave the delicacies of retirement to those who are gentlemen first and literary workmen afterward. The cart and trumpet for me."

One can fancy days when the desire to emulate the violet must almost overcome Mr. Shaw; when the dream of sagging half an inch, admitting that he isn't sure, that possibly the other man knows better, must steal o'er his senses, piercing sweet as the sailor's dreams of home. Yet all such soft surrenders must sternly be put aside. The imperturbably impudent comedian must continue impudent and imperturbable or the public will have none of him.

We can look back at him now, starting out on his audacious adventure, with the sporting sympathy bestowed on one who burns his bridges behind him as he marches into the enemy's country. Like a man walking a tight rope or offering to box any one who will come up into the ring, there was no sitting down nor sidestepping for Mr. Shaw. He has made life much more amusing than it would have been, and from their undistinguished but comfortable places on the ground the crowd can look up now, none the worse for their knocks, and join in the general applause.



III

NOVELLI AND OUR OWN



WHEN Ermete Novelli, the Italian, appeared here a few years ago one was struck with the fact that he belonged to a school of actors and of acting different from what we are accustomed to in America. For one thing, he could act. I do not mean that the pleasure he gave an English-speaking audience was such as to blot out the memory of our own players-indeed, I might have preferred Mr. Sothern's "Hamlet" to Novelli's, and would almost rather have seen "Brown of Harvard" than sit again from eight o'clock until midnight through Novelli's "Othello"merely that in versatility and facile technic this Italian virtuoso knew more in a minute, as the saying goes, than most of our actors would in a thousand years.

Much of this effect was due, of course, to his different race and the Italian habit of fluent gesture, but the more interesting part lay in what seemed to be his own intention

and state of mind. For here was a man who was, first of all and unblushingly, a playactor. He was interesting for what he did on the stage, and not because he was a knight, or might or might not be nice to his family, or had a palace in Venice or a house on Riverside Drive, or was a perfect gentleman and scholar off the stage, and really just as nice as we. He was born for the part. He had a long, hooked nose, high cheek-bones, deep-set, commanding eyes, and a broad, mobile mouth. His fingers, even the thumb, were covered with rings. He was a professional, proud to show his skill, and it much depressed him that, during his short stay here, out of a repertory of a hundred or more plays, he could but present practically all of the great Shakespearian rôles, a number of comedies, and a few detached monologues.

He reminded one of the actor in one of Mr. Gouverneur Morris's stories who could count up to ten in Arabic, in a sad voice, and say, "That is how I lost her," and make ten tears roll down his audience's face; then count over again in a comic fashion and make them roar with laughter; who, as he was dying,

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said, "Look, I am improving, I am getting better," joked like one who had passed a serious climax, and then exclaimed hilariously, "I can still do it!" and died.

In his virtuosity, in the pathological accuracy on which his realism was built, in his behavior toward his audience there was much of this "I-can-still-do-it" business in Ermete Novelli. When he had a long soliloquy he generally came down to the footlights and talked directly at the orchestra. He did not hesitate himself, nor forbid his company, to step out of the part, and bow to applause when this happened to break forth in the middle of a scene. After his delightful "Papa Lebonnard," instead of sending his audience home with the impression of the quaint, altogether likable old bourgeois father intact in their minds, he must needs hold them for half an hour until he could come out in his own street clothes, with derby hat and stick, and, leaning on his cane, just over the footlights after the manner of the music-hall impersonator, "get off" a rather commonplace, humorous monologue, describing types of playgoers in the average audience. Probably

you would rather have had your nice old clock-maker without this jarring postscript, and I must confess that I much prefer to have actors suppress their desire to bow to curtain calls, at least until the curtain goes down. Mr. Novelli and his colleagues might assert, however, that this merely proved the Anglo-Saxon lack of that fluid wit and quick artistic instinct which permits the Latin to shift back and forth constantly between reality and the conventions of the stage. Each to his taste.

In his own country Novelli, we are told, is best known as a character and comedy actor, and in spite of the cleverness with which he "got away," so to speak, with "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Othello," his work here confirmed the impression that comedy is his natural and most successful vein. The architecture of his face—the long nose, high cheekbones, and broad, mobile mouth, spreading so easily into the comedian's grin; the husky voice—powerful, but without variety or resonance—giving to the liquid Italian a curiously muffled, almost Yiddish, accent at times; his mannerisms, that hoarse, half-ironical "Ah-

ha! Ah-ha!" and that raising of the hands, palms outward, with lifted eyebrows, then clasping them together again—all these things seemed more especially the equipment of a comedian. His "Hamlet," frankly mad much of the time, lacked fineness, grace, and all that intellectual quality which, for example, gives the "Hamlet" of Mr. Forbes-Robertson such distinction.

His "Othello," a marvel in make-up, was turgid and monotonous, toward the end degenerating into mere howling. The death scene, crowded with pathological detail, with the Moor rolling about on the floor, sawing his throat with a dagger, choking, and coughing horribly, sent the spectators away, convinced only that Othello had lungs, a thorax, a great deal of blood, and took an unnecessary time in dying.

In "The Merchant of Venice," however, his close observation and unquenchable comedy sense brought about a happier result than our Shakespearian performers often permit us to see. This Shylock was a man, and not the solemn allegory into which generations of awestruck contemplation have conven-

tionalized Shakespeare's Jew—a very vigorous, vivid, cheerful personality; not without a lively sense of humor, even, and a quick, sardonic grin; one who even went trundling round the stage in the drollest and most plausible sort of dervish's dance when he heard that Antonio's galleons had been lost.

Even when failing to realize our ideas of Shakespeare, Novelli's performances were constant processions of facile technic, delightful to watch for their mere physical fluidity. Such, for instance, was that little formula of business accompanying the "Words, words, words" which answer Polonius's "What do you read, my lord?" "Parole," said Hamlet, eying the old man mysteriously, as he deliberately tore a leaf out of his book and let it flutter to the floor. "Parole," he repeated with a slightly different inflection, tearing out another leaf and tossing it away. Then he tore out a third leaf, flipped it more disdainfully aside, gestured once down, once up. with a satirical "Pouf," then spread out both hands, palms outward, lifting his shoulders and eyebrows at the same time. "Parole!" said he. There is a certain fascination about

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such facile claptrap, which any one fond of acting can watch till the cows come home.

We should scarcely find among our players the like of this curious mingling of genius and the tricks of Punchinello, this smiling readiness to step down at any moment and, so to speak, borrow a few handkerchiefs and a diamond ring from the audience, or pull a white rabbit out of a hat. For this our Englishspeaking actors are far too solemn and respectable. All questions of art aside, the rôle of strolling player and mountebank does not become us. Though we beat the big drum and call the people to our tent, we would have them know that we sleep in a numbered house and have our name in the telephone book, and we will be knighted-or have a motor-car -though we bury Shakespeare under scenery to do it. An essayist might write very entertainingly of these tastes and differences—as many doubtless have done already-how much our qualms at such charlatanism as Novelli's are due to superior taste and how much to mere self-consciousness; where self-respect leaves off and snobbishness begins; how much our zeal for respectability is due to lack of artistic en-

thusiasm and the natural impulse to follow a world the more vigorous minds in which are devoted to making money, how much to a more or less unconscious but generally wholesome desire to live up to the democratic theory that the artist should also be a good citizen.

Equally in vain would be the search among our players, or through the memories of recent years-if one excepts, perhaps, Mr. Richard Mansfield, of whom I shall presently speakfor another figure so robust, rational, manycolored, and bright. The high and sounding names seem gone from our stage with the plays which, in a way, went with them. The canvases are smaller now, the outlines more scrupulously defined, the colors at once more carefully chosen and more biting. The spectator is pierced rather than swept away. There is no lack of good acting—at what period in the history of our stage, for instance, could have been found a play more complete and perfect than Mr. Galsworthy's "The Pigeon" as first acted at The Little Theatre? -yet in quiet realism of this sort the player's art is merged and hidden in the stuff he works

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with; his task, too, becomes one of elimination and austerity. Many, perhaps most, of those who saw "The Pigeon" could not have told six months afterward a single actor's name. It is a case of 2+2=4, all working together and every stroke counting; no splendid, splashing hit or miss, no dizzy prodigality.

Plays of this nature call for a new kind of acting and possibly a new kind of actor. And whether it be due to this or to the fact that there is none among us strong enough to make his own surroundings instead of being made by them—would Booth still be Booth if he were alive to-day?—certain it is that no giant strides forth in these days to ask as his right our universal applause.

In plays depending on character and naturalistic appearances rather than on sound and fury, the actor's success is largely determined by his natural fitness for the part, and a player superb to-day may to-morrow be quite out of the picture. There is no general manner or method with which to bungle through passably, as was not infrequently the privilege of the robust gentlemen of the old Shakespearian

school. A young German-American, Mr. Frank Reicher, plays, for instance, the straw man come to life in Mr. Percy Mackaye's "Scarecrow." Mr. Reicher has a finely cut, rather poetical face, a sensitive temperament, movements somewhat constrained and wooden. and a slight accent. The combination of these qualities made his "Scarecrow" a thing of very delicate and perfect art. His very defects became merits, and what might have seemed a lack of flexibility in another rôle only helped here to give the imitation man the proper touch of unreality. When Mr. Reicher attempted to play the gallant Marlow to Miss Annie Russell's Miss Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer," he was, as might have been expected, very unlike the character indeed. Mr. Norman McKinnell, as the hard-fisted old mill owner in "Rutherford and Son," who sacrificed every member of his family in one way or another in order that Rutherford might thrive, held the spectator in a grip rarely felt in the theatre. So complete a symbol was he of that flinty, grinding, joyless life—the very pictures on the wall and the grim old mantelpiece seemed matched by the lines of his face

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—that the audience was one of that crushed and cowering family and lived their cheerless life. The greatest actor that ever lived might not have done more in the part—nor in a score of others which will come at once to every one's mind—yet one would hesitate to call Mr. McKinnell "great." The happy synthesis of scene, lines, action, and character might never fall to him again.

Looking back over a vista of theatre nights, it is bright milestones such as these which shine out from the general blur-"bits" here and there rather than, as in the case of an actor like Novelli, a long gallery of portraits by the same hand. The star system and our habit of petrifying the artist as soon as possible in the particular shape in which he pleased the public first, is, of course, partially responsible for this. Mr. John Drew's stage personality is as fixed as the Washington Monument, but, as we have few actors suited to polite comedy, petrification in this instance is less mournful than it might be. In Mr. Drew's case, indeed, we do look down a long gallery of portraits-albeit they are all of the same kind. What varied notes Mr. David

Warfield might have struck, beyond that key of homely pathos which he plays with such moving skill, may never be known, perhaps, inasmuch as the exigencies of piling up a fortune appear to demand that he strike but one. Circumscribed as is his field, he is master of his audience within it, and he can hold them for seconds at a time without a word, so silent that the proverbial pin could be heard to drop. His is acting one remembers, as one does the subtle, suave, insinuating villainy of Mr. George Arliss or-to jump to the other extreme—the drollery of Mr. William Collier. Mr. Collier is one of the surest of our comedians. His very movements are funny, though the spectator might be hard put to explain why, and the dry, quick, almost diffident fashion in which he makes his points sometimes gives to an ordinary pun the quality of exquisite wit. "How will you have your eggs cooked?" "Oh, any way." "That is the way they are cooked." "Don't you drink anything?" "Yes-anything," says Mr. Collier, and in such a way that the ancient subject of alcohol seems fresh as the flowers of May.

Mr. William Gillette had a keen stage sense and was able to give to the most trivial things an air of mystery and importance. The telegraph operator in "Secret Service" and the part of Sherlock Holmes exactly fitted his suppressed, laconic style—his manner of suggesting that underneath that quiet, casual mask there were tremendous things afoot. He was at his best in the tense and creepy, and it is difficult to visualize Conan Doyle's famous detective in any other shape than that of Mr. Gillette. The theatric quality of his acting, quiet though it was, its association, so to speak, with green light and shiver music from the violins, was likely to put Mr. Gillette out of the picture when he tried something out of his peculiar vein.

When, in Bernstein's "Samson," for instance, the suppressed passion which our austere, acidulous Sherlock was always suggesting actually had to come to the surface, and Mr. Gillette to howl into another man's face and finally throw him across a table and choke him, the audience suffered a quick pang of disappointment. Such behavior was almost unseemly, and no released emotion, however

violent, could but seem tame and insufficient in contrast to that which appeared to be with difficulty suppressed, so long as he remained taut and pale and inscrutable. When Mr. Gillette essayed sentimental comedy in his own play, "Clarice," he fell into difficulties at the other end of the scale. That even, metallic utterance, and the trick of repeating, in a preoccupied fashion, the same thought—an effective method in its proper place of suggesting that under a quiet exterior the speaker is planning mighty things and is presently about to surprise us—became, in "Clarice," a mannerism.

Thus if Doctor Carrington wanted to convey to Clarice the notion that 2+2=4, it would reach the audience somewhat in this wise (A far-away metallic falsetto, speaking without periods in the same key): "Two and two are four, you know. Oh, yes—they are—They couldn't be five-you-know-that-wouldn't-do-at-all-would it—(Mr. Gillette striding rapidly away, his fore-head wrinkled up like Mr. Arthur Brisbane at his very cleverest, the metallic falsetto fading mysteriously) No—no! No—no—no—"

The mannerism had the effect of constantly

giving mysterious pseudo-significance to observations which were mere statements of fact, until one rebelled at the forced air of suspense.

Mr. Frank Keenan is another player with the knack of giving creepiness and bite to the smallest details, and rather more than Mr. Gillette's acting versatility. Although he has generally appeared in secondary parts, no American player, perhaps, is more gifted—and it seems to be a gift rather than something acquired-with the knack of "getting things over." His style is naturalistic and especially suited to quick, sinister, melodramatic "bits" -the gambler with the white "poker face" in the "Girl of the Golden West," for instance vet he can put on a toga and play a Roman with the rest of them. Here, to be sure, his playing lacks breadth and nobility; in comparison with the old-school tradition of grandiloquence, he seems a trifle colloquial and close to the ground. Yet, between sticking close to the ground and being real, and soaring aloft to be merely windy-as our modern Shakespearians are likely to do-there seems little to choose. Shakespeare's plays are drama, after all, and not mere exercises in elocution.

I was impressed with this while watching Mr. Faversham's production of "Julius Cæsar," in which Mr. Keenan played Cassius and Mr. Faversham, Antony. It was an election-day matinée and outside the country was deciding between Mr. Wilson, Mr. Taft, and Colonel Roosevelt.

"Why, man," rasped Cassius, "he doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus. In the name of all the gods at once, when could they say till now, that talked of Rome, that her wide walls encompassed but one man?" The force of the lines was increased, of course, by what was in the air, yet it was in good part Mr. Keenan's gift of reality that brought them home to the spectator as if he were listening to a campaign orator on the nearest street corner, or an editorial from the New York Evening Post.

The feeling of concreteness and vitality which this scene of Mr. Keenan's gave was more agreeable to me, at least, than anything else in the play. Mr. Tyrone Power, as Brutus, seemed to be depending a little too much on the magnetic sound of his voice—and a most unusual organ it is, as he has many times re-

vealed—and not thinking overmuch of what the lines were intended to convey. And a somewhat similar lack was felt in Mr. Faversham's Antony, vivid and pleasing as it was and amiably disposed as the spectator must inevitably be to the actor who had the artistic energy to put on the play. The noble Roman, Mr. Faversham was always. He has an unusually fine figure and carriage, a rich and melodious utterance. The picture he makes not only has dignity but a vivid, youthful quality which is undeniably attractive. The lack is that of light and shade, of the suggestion of intellectuality behind that fixed expression, which might almost have been that of a man looking from a car window or driving an automobile-for Antony, although a Roman, was a sensitive, clever, and subtle man.

Mr. Faversham, indeed, lacks precisely the thing Mr. Keenan has—the gift for naturalistic detail, for giving his work that curious, indefinable theatric bite—and he possesses most of the lofty and spacious grace which Mr. Keenan has been denied. He used to be a matinée idol, with a bull-terrier and at least a suggestion of that air of accurate clothes and

ineradicable virility which the matinée girl endows-or in those days did endow-her notion of a Yale man. Such he might possibly have continued to be, to his material profit, and it is greatly to Mr. Faversham's credit and our advantage that he had the artistic energy to develop his talents, or at least to use them in the presentation of plays which most popular favorites do not think it worth while to bother with. His "Julius Cæsar" was only one of several such services. It was Mr. Faversham who produced an English version of Echegaray's "El Gran Galeoto" under the title "The World and His Wife"—the only one of the Spanish dramatist's plays which most of his American audience had ever seen-and Stephen Phillips's poetic drama "Herod" both of which efforts were worthily enough discharged to deserve the public's gratitude.

With his fine figure and voice and his adaptability to the statuesque pose and large, free gesture, Mr. Faversham might almost be said to have been born too late—the theatre of fifty years ago might have offered him a wider field. Mr. Sothern, on the other hand, strikes one as a contemporary who would pre-

fer to be an ancient. Suited in physique and sensitive intelligence, apparently, to modern comedy, he is determined to play Shakespeare. The task is, to be sure, not overdone in our day. Few who attempt it have Mr. Sothern's resources, material and otherwise, for placing their personal contribution in an appropriate frame, and his association with Miss Marlowe has so happily provided the public both with what it ought to have and what it wants, that one would scarcely wish him otherwise.

Looking at Mr. Sothern as a mere actor, however, instead of a public benefactor, with certain differences between the old and new styles of acting in mind, irrelevant speculations as to his entire appropriateness for his chosen rôles will occasionally obtrude. One sometimes feels that here is a light comedian lost to make a somewhat indifferent interpreter of tragedy. The weight of Shakespearian tradition hangs heavy on him, and, despite his intelligence, grace, and beauty of diction, gives to his feet a stagy drag, to every accent of his voice somewhat of the dying fall. The fire which beamed forth so gracefully in his old romantic parts is circumscribed and dulled. There is a

lack of robustness and the full-throated bass. We have forever the melancholy Dane, or Romeo at his maddest—and as for Romeo, I have seen an unknown Romeo in a ten-twenty-thirty stock company come nearer to Shake-speare than the pale and drooping Mr. Sothern.

Miss Marlowe, on the other hand, seems destined by nature for the older, loftier style. There is a noble simplicity in her face and shape and movement, a mellowness and richness which seem part of an earlier, less nervous time. Her words and glance descend into the heart as well as strike the eye and ear, and we are not so much struck as enveloped by the feeling she imparts, and swept gratefully away. She seems remote from our petty world—a Galatea come to life with a woman's soul and as yet no knowledge of the little, noisy fretful things that trouble us. In the gentler parts, although the opposite of cold, there is yet a childlike naturalness in her freedom, an innocence unconscious of itself, more charming than all the knowing refinements. In harder parts, even as Lady Macbeth, though she cannot be the steely murderess another might, she yet achieves in her own way the effect of force,

and the horror which others might compel is felt no less for being mixed in her case with pity that fate should thus have perverted this amplitude of warm, sweet womanliness.

Miss Marlowe would have fitted with little trouble into Novelli's company, playing the heavier woman's parts alongside that young lady with the voice of silver and ivory who did the lighter ones-a fragile, Botticelli sort of person, with slim fingers so long that she rather quaintly kept them tucked up on her wrists, until in some moment of emphasis they flashed out in their astounding length and taperingness.

Mrs. Fiske, who has written plays as well as acted them, fought commercialism, and given unknown play-writers a hearing-led the stage, in short—is distinctly of our time. She is a modern and belongs to our restless, self-conscious day. A sparkling comedienne whenever she wishes to be-the note of irony is always close to the surface of her linesand possessing a dramatic force more penetrating and mordant than any other of our players, her mission is less to beguile than to rouse and stir. She "makes us think" rather

than takes us to the islands of the blest. She is nearer Shaw than Shakespeare, and her Juliet would be something of a feminist and reminds us, if but in some latent tone of her voice, that there are such things as tenement-house commissions and workers for social service. Her acting is quick, restless, and piercing, dynamic rather than broad, easy, and spacious. She stabs rather than carries one along on a pleasant tide, and she can express more concentrated and pent-up emotion in a nervous twitch of shoulder or lip than most players can reveal with waving arms and torrents of concatenated howls.

Alla Nazimova is scarcely "one of our own," perhaps, although it was here she learned the language in which she plays and burst from her rather sombre husk into the brilliant orchid she has since become. She swept, a sort of comet, into our dull skies. A little band of half-starved Russian argonauts playing "The Chosen People" before an audience of weeping Roman Jews on the lower East Side; a stuffy box of a theatre, a little farther uptown, with a gallery scarce higher than a man's head, and this strange, dark-eyed girl

beginning to stand out from the rest; the advance, by way of a side-street playhouse, to the fringe of Broadway; and then, overboard with the old companions, a new tongue, and the single-handed venture into the shining unknown—it has, indeed, been a career.

It was her body and the vivid strokes she flung off with it which startled, dazzled, and allured. She was a mermaid, a leopard, with the smooth, undulating grace of the one, the other's lithe, feline strength. She could draw herself up like a serpent, with a quick, boneless heave that began one knew not where, until—though but of medium height—she seemed to tower over all on the stage; and she could collapse all over, with a shuddering rhythm, like the same serpent, dead, and thrown over a chair.

And with this dexterity she combined a theatric instinct and a savage frankness compared to which our ordinary ways seemed circumspect and pale. Characteristic was the instant in which her Hedda learned of Loveberg's suicide. She was seated, the long, black, snaky body held erect, on her pale face the morbid exaltation of believing that he had

killed himself "beautifully"—that is to say, shot himself through the heart. Then came Brack's rasping: "Not in the heart—in the bowels." At the word the erect torso, softly strong, snapped shut like a jack-knife and her pale hands clutched convulsively an imagined wound. It was as quiet and quick as lightning, yet fairly stabbed one's physical nerves. It could hardly have occurred to one of our own actresses to do this as Nazimova did it. If it had it might not have seemed exactly "pleasant." Ibsen's idea was not "pleasant."

With the same vividness she can fill the stage, or, at least, her particular part of it (for of that Miss Nazimova is rather careful), with bubbling-over youth and freshness. The laughing April-wind animality of her Nora, in her brisk Scotch plaid, was irresistible. Her "Oh! I am so happy!" with arms and head flung back, had all the crisp finality of music. Her Hilda Wangel burst into the master builder's dingy workshop—and his middleaged fears—as clean and cruel as sunlight. The very air shrank back before that fierce vitality. Her talent expresses itself in a con-

tinual physical virtuosity which startles and thrills, if it rarely touches the nobler tragic note.

Of late she has drifted far from her simple beginnings and overaccented the more exotic side of her personality, as if determined to "run it into the ground." In remoteness from the life about her-from Mrs. Fiske, for instance-she suggests that splendid, older orchid, Sarah Bernhardt, yet between these two artificialities there are differences quite as marked. Though Nazimova paints posters for posters' sake, they are filled with almost pathological detail. By instinct she is a naturalist. The Divine Sarah, on the other hand, is inalterably romantic. A sort of emotional moonlight would forever surround her, though she were playing in the blazing desert. She speaks or smiles, and there is music in the air. Much of her art resembles that of the older opera, in which the consumptive heroine sings sweetest-and most elaborately-ere she dies, yet it rarely fails to thrill, to touch the crowd's sympathy and tears. Her ways are not those of a generation which has learned to think in the theatre; indeed, her art is precisely to

make one forget—forget everything but Sarah herself, and applaud frantically and shout: "Bravo! Bravo!" as the curtain goes down.

During a recent visit—five years before we had bade farewell to that golden voice, those limelit sorceries, that splendid, unconquerable spirit which was leaving us, as we feelingly pointed out, perhaps never to return—during this later farewell, she amused herself for an afternoon with "Madame X," a melodrama of the day. Miss Dorothy Donnelly, a capable young actress with considerable experience in melodrama, had been playing the rôle with an almost youthful Kipling's delight in brutal realism. Her picture of the woman's degradation was such a strain on the nerves, in fact, that it was not uncommon for women to be carried out, as one was carried out the night I saw the play, struggling and gurgling: "Oh, I can't see it! I can't see it!"

This is, of course, forbidden by the Bernhardt tradition. You may break, you may shatter the poor old audience if you will, but you must still be attractive and beautiful. Bernhardt never let the woman quite lose her frayed gentility, and got her effects by sudden

explosions from her comparatively quiet key. Such was the climax of the first act when the guilty wife was driven from her home in a screaming duel with her husband, one hand convulsively clutching the door-jamb, after her body had disappeared, like the hand of a drowning person above the water.

In front of me at that performance sat Mr. Billy Muldoon, that bronzed and squarejawed dealer in youth and repairer of wrecked constitutions, fairly thrusting his glasses into the footlights as if to discover a secret which even he did not know. From a stage-box one of our youngest Broadway stars looked down, with all the intensity of expression of a Dresden china teacup, while her white gloves, held high, beat languidly back and forth in that curious way in which ladies sometimes indicate, without making audible, their applause. And from behind, out of a warm blur of furs, faces, and vague perfume-it was a Friday matinée, and all the idle stage world was there—there came with the applause a curious collective emotion, questioning, sceptical, and at once devoted, loyal, and thrilled -the present generation measuring from its

opulent youth this marvellous old lady on the stage.

At such moments, as she inclines to the applause, hands clasped beside her cheek, head thrown a little back and to one side, an ecstatic smile breaking through the vermilion lips and heavily darkened eyes, narrowed to slits of coruscating fire—that do-with-me-as-you-will gesture of the grande artiste—at such moments, with the house electric with applause, she becomes in a way transfigured. Behind her you can see the vista of crowded years, other nights and other audiences like this, back to the days of our grandfathers. In a world of compromise and half living, here is one who has gone the full length and in her own fashion greatly lived.

The easy final judgment of an actor's work becomes increasingly difficult the more one grows acquainted with the curious and complicated phenomena of Broadway. That halcyon time of innocence in which the author is blamed if the play is bad and the actor blamed if the acting is bad—and a play must be taken as it is, of course, and not as it might have been—may scarcely be enjoyed to the full by

those who have got so far even as to have an acquaintance "in the business."

When one has viewed the author's writhings at having his note of grateful sentiment or whimsical comedy smashed to satisfy the producer's demand for a "punch," or seen the beautiful heroine in the last act topple into the arms of a man who bores her to death in order that some mythical lack of "love interest" may be filled, or because the star declared that the omission of his "love scene" is something to which the public would never consent, it is less simple, the next time, to call the apparently feeble-minded playwright to account.

When the lady counterfeiter acts as if she were trying to sing blank verse instead of talk colloquial English, it ought to be easy to see that she is a bad actress; but this feat is complicated by the knowledge that the leading man, who owns a half interest in the play and has his name in electric lights out in front, compels the poor creature so to mouth her lines in order that his own terse method may stand out more clearly and the audience be the more impressed with the iron self-control

and superhuman perception of his stage detective.

The tyranny of stars might seem beyond all understanding and excuse did not one recall the strange power acting has to steel the human breast. You have but to go to the nearest suburban dramatic club to find, in miniature, the same jealousies, the same eternal conflict between actor and author. The one is convinced that the other mangles his play, and he positive that it is only his own dazzling improvisations which keep the audience from rising in a body and going home.

One glare of the footlights—even the somewhat feeble footlights of the village hall—appears to burn the player's every-dayhusk away. He is a creature transformed, breathes a thinner, more intoxicating ether, has drunk strange wine. An instant before a hard-headed lawyer, now he knows no law, but leaps from license to license, and there's no holding him. If acting can thus transform the mere Saturday-evening amateur, a good deal may be forgiven the professional to whom the nightly applause is not only the breath of life, but the very meat and drink of it, the proof that he can "still do

it," the measure of his survival in a cruel, competitive trade.

Richard Mansfield was generally supposed to be something of a tyrant and to sacrifice his associates and even the author's work to his own advantage. His occasional habit of scolding his audience, and the aggressive, almost granitic personality felt all through his work, tended to confirm this reputation; yet, if all the gossip were true, surely no other American player of his day had so good a right to the high hand. Nor did any—finer and more delicate artist though he were in a more restricted field—have so much the quality of greatness, stand forth so salient a figure, after the fashion of the interesting Italian with whom these remarks commenced.

During the latter days of his career Mr. Mansfield was occasionally spoken of as the worst actor in America. The glimmer of wit which such remarks were supposed to have came from Mr. Mansfield's positive temperament and his mannerisms. His "bark," the curious expression of his sturdy legs—"So many of my critics," he once protested, "harp upon my physical shortcomings, forgetting

that I am not playing to them with my legs, but with my mind"—his habit of jumping his voice up an octave on the third or fourth syllable of a sentence, especially in vehement declamation—all these were habitual and, it sometimes seemed, almost perverse. He was not the sort of artist delicately to insinuate himself beneath the skin of a rôle, to glide into and become part of it. There was too much of the inalterable "I." His aggressive intellectuality did not melt—although he was amazingly versatile—but rather seized a part and forced the spectator to accept his interpretation whether or no.

It was in the tricky part of Baron Chevrial in "A Parisian Romance" that he jumped all at once into fame, and it was in dramatic externals, the painting of vivid portraits rather than in the deeper interpretation of character, that he was at his best. He had astonishing physical virtuosity—sometimes too much. The hands trembling until Shylock's deed and scales fairly rattled, the shaky wine-glass in the hand of Baron Chevrial, the faint rattling of the sword-hilt in Don Carlos's trembling hand—so perfectly done and long continued

that the curious spectator must take his attention from the main swing of the scene to see how the trick was done—this was a too clever cleverness, and although he could assume the air of youth with astonishing accuracy—as in "Monsieur Beaucaire," for instance, or "Old Heidelberg"-it was physical grace and sprightliness rather than a boy's awkwardness and innocence. His Prince in "Old Heidelberg" made love all too thoroughly, and one recalls how, in the early scenes of "Peer Gynt," he represented careless and imaginative youth by describing continuous and mysterious circles about his head until one almost expected him to pull a silver dollar out of one of his ears or ask which one of the three shells the little ball was under. The change in "Peer Gynt," however, from the fantastic boy of the northern fiords to the canny old materialist on the beach at Morocco, with his white spats and English accent, was one of those vivid effects he specially relished, and he played it with captivating sureness and gusto.

He was, to be sure, a "character actor" and not unwilling to sacrifice his company and play to put his one vivid portrait in a brighter

light; yet under whatever mask he wore was felt a force, a certain all-there-ness close to genius. With this he wore the polished insolence of Beau Brummel as if it were a glove, and rose to his full height in parts calling for decision, aggressive masculinity, the fervor of intelligent power. If the kind of thing he did was not always the greatest kind of thing to do, he did it in a great way. He was always vivid, virile, and sure, and he had that greatest of things, a voice, always magnetic, which rose like a trumpet when he so wished and flung the lines across the footlights, vibrating and alive, to grip his audience and conquer it.

His very acerbity became to the audiences of his latter days a sort of charm. They sat back with the smiling assurance that the king could do no wrong, and what might once have been resented as bumptiousness was welcomed as the lovable human frailty of one who had won the right to treat them lightly. When his work ended with a scene yet to be played nothing delighted them more than to have him whip off his wig and answer the curtain calls, no more the artist, but the round-headed man, blinking across the footlights that inscruta-

ble, bulldoggy smile, and holding his dressinggown about his throat as if he had just been interrupted in some very important game of tennis. This, as it were, assumption of the non-existence of an audience suggested that substratum of acid and flint of which they had heard, and they were charmed, as the public ever is when its favorites do what is expected of them.

Instead of reclining in this easy prosperity, as he might have done, he was always driving ahead; and he could be counted on each year to add at least one new portrait to his already varied gallery. Long before Mr. Shaw was heard of, so to speak, he had acquainted America with "Arms and the Man" and "The Devil's Disciple." It was he who produced "Cyrano de Bergerac" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"; and even "The Scarlet Letter," unsatisfactory as it was as a play, was inspired by his intelligent interest in literature and his ambition worthily to transfer it to the stage.

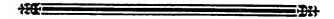
He produced, for the first time in English, Molière's "Misanthrope." An enormous amount of erudition hitherto locked up in en-

cyclopædias and undergraduate classrooms was printed along with the news of the day, and one had the novel experience of walking from Forty-second Street into seventeenth-century Paris and finding the wheels in people's heads moving strangely as they do to-day. He followed it with Schiller's "Don Carlos." only less successful because the play was less actable and the personality of that unhappy young Prince less in Mr. Mansfield's vein. The next year he presented "Peer Gynt," which had never been seen in England or America, and forthwith the Grieg music was whistled in the streets and the theatre packed for weeks with crowds to whom Peer's experiments in unconditional self-realization apparently seemed as entertaining as "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." The power of an actor, as secure in his position as Mr. Mansfield, to stir the public is a marvellous thing, and he was one of the few to feel his responsibilities and live up to them. Shylock, Brutus, Henry V, Prince Karl, Don Juan, Nero, Napoleon, and Ivan the Terrible were among his other rôles. "Peer Gynt" was his last, and when he dropped out, almost in harness, there was none to take his place.



IV

A MINOR POET OF BROADWAY



IF New York had a Montmartre and Mr. George Cohan were a Frenchman, one can almost imagine him wearing baggy clothes and a Windsor tie, and stalking up and down between the tables of his café chantant of an evening, singing his songs of Broadway. People would take him seriously, admire his lyrics because they were so "instinct" with the spirit of a certain curious fringe of society, and words and music would doubtless be published in limited de-luxe editions for circulation among the literati.

Mr. Cohan is a talented young man. He can dance in a way to charm wild beasts from their dens and make them sit up and wonder; he expresses the feelings of a certain metropolitan type as does no one else, and he not only sings and acts his pieces, but also writes their words and music. People who would naturally derive no pleasure from that con-

glomeration of noise and cheapness of which his musical plays superficially consist are often baffled to explain the odd fascination of Mr. Cohan's personal work. It seems to consist very much in the sincerity and artistic conviction with which he does the precise thing that you yourself probably would try not to do. He neither attempts to impersonate the gentleman in the narrower sense of the word, nor, on the other hand, to hide his own personality behind some such broad character part as the traditional Bowery tough boy. Instead he assumes the cheap sophistication of the blase racing tout or book-maker, sings through his nose practically on one note, wears clothes that just miss being the real thing-in short, pitches everything in the key of slangy cynicism and cheapness characteristic of that curious half-world which foregathers at Fortysecond Street and the shady side of Broadway. So clever a person could doubtless assume a superficial refinement for stage purpose if he wanted to. Mr. Cohan apparently doesn't; apparently he has carefully worked out a "method" aimed at sublimated cheapness, and got away with it.

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In "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway," a curiously uneven conglomeration of "musical comedy," puns, and melodrama, ostensibly designed as a vehicle for the familiar humor of Miss Fay Templeton, Mr. Cohan has created in Kid Burns a character rather broader than he himself impersonates, but typical of his point of view. The Kid is "secretary" to a young millionaire who has just taken a house at New Rochelle, and through him the spectator views that suburb—not as it is, probably, but as it might appear in the day-dream of some good-humored book-maker or wiretapper lounging of a summer afternoon in the shade of the Metropole. As the Kid sings:

"Only forty-five minutes from Broadway. Think of the changes it brings,

For the short time it takes, what a difference it makes in the ways of the people and things."

His droll amazement at the ease with which he can "get a laugh" with the stalest line— "all the old stuff goes here"—his genuine desperation at the inability of the suburbanites to understand his nimble slang—"You've gotta talk baby-talk to these guys—all they can

understand is pantomime"—these and similar observations are given such sincerity and earnestness, such an almost pathetic appeal, by the quiet-voiced, lazily good-humored, plaintive Kid that for the moment the homesickness of this parasite of the town, as he thinks of himself, "standin' at the corner of Forty-second Street, smokin' a fi'-cent Cremo cigar, an' waitin' for the next race to come in," seems important. His principal song, with the lullaby-like refrain coming at the end of each verse-"only forty-five minutes from Broadway"—and Mr. Victor Moore's singing of it, are perfect of their kind. The emotion which makes the lights of Broadway the sun of one's existence, and its fatuous and premeditated gayety the music of one's soul, is not a heroic one, but to a certain corner of the world it is exceedingly real. And in Kid Burns Mr. Moore and Mr. Cohan unite in very entertainingly expressing it. . . .

January, 1906.

Mr. Cohan keeps developing. He not only sings of Broadway, but he is getting to be a sort of song-bird and prophet of that frank

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materialism characteristic of a certain side of New York, and, indeed, of America. It is for this reason that his "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," which he has arranged from stories written by Mr. George Randolph Chester for one of the magazines, is a much more genuine expression of his audience's notions of fun than anything a Falstaff might do, and for them, at least, a more satisfying form of art.

This get-rich-quick man comes to a little country town to inveigle the local financiers into investing in a company to manufacture a covered carpet-tack. The piercing eye of the critic perceives that he is nothing more nor less than a confidence man, in spite of the magnetic charm and healthy good humor of the young man who plays the part; yet his qualities of energy, resourcefulness, and his breezy command of all situations, are things which, in a little different form, are greatly admired in America—more generally admired, perhaps, than anything else.

There is a certain special pleasure to be derived from any spontaneous art. Shake-speare's audiences liked to eat and drink, so they were amused at a sort of Gargantuan

eater and drinker. Mr. Cohan's audiences like to make money, and it is natural that they should be amused by a man who makes it with absurd easiness and a light heart.

It is reassuring to record that Wallingford and his pal fall in love in the little town and reform, as people fortunately are able to do, at least in plays. It should also be said that the covered carpet-tack turns out to be a good thing after all. At any rate, the sales are enormous, and that makes a thing good, presumably. Of course, Mr. Cohan is not alone in this worship of the main chance, but he worships with an unusually frank and childlike sincerity. Surely nothing could be more quaintly genuine-indeed, in its primal joy, quite truly Elizabethan—than the head waitress, who, having been swept up to luxury on the carpet-tack wave, languidly asks to be excused from shaking hands because her innumerable diamond rings would hurt her fingers. . .

December, 1908.

In "Broadway Jones," Mr. Cohan discards songs, chorus girls, and his own dances, and

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offers himself as a regular actor. One can easily imagine a stranger to America, inspecting us for the first time, finding this the freshest and most characteristic exhibit of our theatres. Polite comedy, such as Mr. Drew presents, timely melodrama, like "Within the Law," musical plays—all these things are but imitations or duplications of things done just as well or better abroad. "Broadway Jones," though but a flower of the Broadway asphalt, is wholly of the soil.

The lights of that strange thoroughfare completely bound this young man's world. The little town of Jonesville, Connecticut, where the paternal chewing-gum factory was situated—Broadway broke from that shabby cocoon as soon as he came into his fortune—the suburbs, the entire universe, indeed, beyond the shows and restaurants of New York, is the abode of "rubes" living in an outer darkness. "Were you ever in Newark? . . . Then you know what I suffered." In a moment of inspiration he thinks of having enough money "to buy Brooklyn—and then close it up." Waiters fight for him as he enters a restaurant; barbers rush to their chairs at

his approach as if they were answering firealarms.

His trust in money—the concrete, touchable means of turning up the Broadway lamps and making its world kowtow-is similarly childlike. At the opening of the piece the realization that he is at last completely "broke" arrives coincidentally with a telegram announcing his uncle's demise and that the chewing-gum plant is now his. The first impulse is to sell out to the Trust for the millions they offer him, and in the next three acts, which take place at Jonesville, Broadway's ingenuous desire to get the cash at once is contrasted with the earnest attempts of the young woman secretary of the factory to make him see that his duty to his family—who have had the business for three generations-and to the hundreds of workmen who would be turned out if the Trust took the plant, should make him buckle down and continue the business. Perhaps the best comedy of the piece is the scene in which the brisk young secretary explains the flourishing condition of the business, while Broadway, to whom all her remarks, except phrases like "hundred thou-

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sand dollars' worth," are entirely incomprehensible, endeavors to appear interested and at the same time keeps murmuring, with curious zigzag gestures expressive of his mystified state of mind: "Yes—but what I want to know is how much . . . that is, when you come right down to it, what's—how much cash is there and when can I get it?"

Here, as in "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," thanks to the melting influence of the secretary, there is at least a nominal regeneration, and we see Broadway at last apparently about to settle down in the old town. Mr. Cohan keeps his note of broad farce to the end, however, and although the secretary's personal charms gild the picture of the business handed down to him which he must hand down to his children-"and so on-and so on," as Broadway remarks, with a wave of the hand, when a sentimental relative begins with "Your grandfather sat in that chair-and he died. Then your father sat there—and he died. And then your uncle sat there—and he died. And now you—" "No, you don't!" says Broadway, with characteristic regard for the immediate present, and changes his seat.

Without Mr. Cohan's childlike cocksureness, without his clothes and his walk and his hat tipped over one eye and his way of talking through his nose, this unregenerate child of Broadway would lose half his charm. Mr. Cohan's more or less consciously elaborated surface "cheapness" actually makes his characters more likable by taking them into the region of caricature where ordinary judgments are disarmed. The black patent-leather shoes with tan tops and the nasal monotone have a relation to reality similar to that of the action of the play-express a similar taste and trust. The surface is farcical, but through the heightened light we see more clearly the genuine feeling beneath—the poetry, so to speak, of this quaint cheapness and vulgarity. Again, Mr. Cohan becomes its voice. The theatre, the play, and the principal part are his, and he does not rely, as far as I can recall, on a word of spoken slang. We may be writing about Mr. Cohan's "third period" or "later manner" before he gets through.

February, 1910.



V

THE HIDDEN MEANING



THERE is a machine called the pantograph, with which, by tracing over with one pencil, rather laboriously, the outlines of some tiny picture, you cause another pencil to draw, all by itself and intuitively, as it were, a much larger picture. What the pantograph is to the draughtsman the allegory is to the writer—only fascinatingly more so. Hitch your wagon to it and there is no telling whither you may soar.

Consider, for example, a young man and his Dulcinea playing mumblety-peg any fine spring afternoon on the nearest country-club lawn. Both young people are, let us say, absolutely inarticulate, unable to express in intelligible English sentences their regard for each other.

The young lady, remarking on the beauty of the weather, wishes that she had a one-hundred-and-twenty-horse-power automobile. The youth, with ready wit, hopes that when she gets one she will come round some day and

give him a ride. She, rallying brilliantly, intimates that possibly she might make him her chauffeur. He, following the inevitable association of ideas, enlarges on the zeal and faithfulness with which he would perform the chauffeur's duties—carry her brilliantly past all the others in the road, soften the rough places, shelter her when it rained. In short, in five minutes—simply by catching hold of an automobile—this mute, inglorious youth is talking poetry.

Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy's play, "The Servant in the House," was an interesting example of the way in which an allegory, once caught and put to work, so to speak, becomes a very genie, compared with whose huge ministrations the author seems scarcely more than a little anxious man rubbing a lamp.

The atrophy of Christian spirit, the worldliness of the modern "fashionable" church, was Mr. Kennedy's theme, and he brought these things face to face with the Christ spirit by reincarnating that spirit in the form of an Oriental servant who comes to an English vicarage and serves as a sort of butler in the house.

A bishop who visits here represents the worldly ecclesiastic—a high-church politician who courts the rich, ignores the poor, and lives luxuriously on rents contributed by squalor and vice. Naturally an oldish man, gouty, perhaps, a little deaf and near-sighted. What more inevitable than to give him an ear-trumpet, double spectacles, and have him stumble against the furniture now and then as he moves about the stage? And behold the result! Every time the Servant addresses him and he irritably reaches for the ear-trumpet and squeaks, "What's that, what's that?" Every time he squints and tries to see, or bumps into a table or chair, each spectator, according to his own experience and fervor, sees the deafness and blindness and bigotry and blundering of the modern fashionable church. These simple bits of stage business have the force of the most brilliant and powerful "lines." They thunder and roar. Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe, and all the rest of them could, at the moment, achieve nothing more impressive. And this sort of effect is constantly made, its force and frequency depending on the spectator's keenness in following

the symbolism and the richness of his mental background.

In the climax of his little fantasy, "Pantaloon," Mr. Barrie strikes a similar blow with what seem at first sight the airiest means. The traditional figures of English pantomime are used here to retell the old story of love finding a way in spite of the irate father and the rich and brutal suitor of his choice, and all being forgiven when the grandchild comes.

As the curtain rises on Pantaloon's shabby old room, Columbine—and how flower-like and airy did Miss Beatrice Agnew make her when the piece was played here, till Harlequin seemed to blow her about with his breath!—Columbine is kneeling before the fireplace in her bouncy ballet skirt, just as if she were in the pantomime, toasting bread and sausages. Brisk young Harlequin, in his queer, variegated tights, frisks in with all his harlequin postures and gesturing. He has brought the ring. It is scarcely on Columbine's finger—all this in pantomime—when old Pantaloon totters in, leaning on his stick. He has "missed his laugh" that day. When he fell into the barrel

the people out in front never stirred—he, the inimitable Old Un—"so funny you can't look at me without laughing; just try it now!" Then follows—Pantaloon speaking, the young folks in pantomime—the discovery of the ring and the old man's refusal of consent. Columbine must be given to the Clown, the great Joey, upon whom Pantaloon is dependent for his place in the company.

Columbine gives up her love at first for her father's sake, but when the horrid Clown comes in—the rich, the brutal, leering Clown —and leeringly is about to claim her, young Harlequin leaps in through the window, and

out the lovers fly together.

The curtain falls to suggest the flight of years and rises to reveal old Pantaloon, starving, in his garret. The wicked Clown, reeking with success, comes in to taunt him—to offer him a place and then to laugh at him. He will not even tickle him with the hot poker again for old time's sake—he can't grant that favor to folks outside the profession; an artist cannot be familiar with one of the mere public. "No clown"—and he laughs himself out with that cruel laugh of his—"will ever tickle you

again." Then, back after the years to beg forgiveness, come poor Harlequin and Columbine, a little older, tarnished by life's journey, weary and pale. Columbine almost totters as she flutters across the stage. And with them is the Kid, a tiny, impish creature dressed like a clown, who skips under the table before the old man sees him. Pantaloon awakes from the revery into which he had sunk, with his old bladder stick in his arms, to the memory of the past, of all his defeat and bitterness. "Go!" he is about to say, when out from under the table-cloth comes the hot poker, tickling his leg. Out after it comes the Kid, another Joey in miniature, his Kid! And a Clown has tickled him! The two fall to slapping cheeks and sticking out tongues as though Pantaloon were on the stage again.

And it is no mere broken-down actor and an amusing youngster with a vermilion mouth that the audience sees as the curtain falls, but the tragedy of old age and its renunciations, of the artist whose creative fire must sooner or later smoulder down and die, and the miracle of renewed existence, the spark of life passed on as the torch of the Old Un goes out.

Mighty and obedient when the lamp is rubbed in just the right way, the symbol is an extremely sensitive and touchy slave and, especially on the stage, likely to refuse to work at the least excuse. The trouble here is to give him an exterior which will satisfy the eye without destroying his broader usefulness. You may, like Mr. Edwin Milton Royle in his morality play, "The Struggle Everlasting"—between flesh and spirit—wish to suggest "bright college years," but when you fill a stage with badly rouged Broadway supers singing the "Stein Song," it is not youth's fragrance the audience feels.

Maeterlinck is sometimes no more successful, beautiful as is his poetry. His "blue bird of happiness," which was so hard to catch and couldn't be caged, apparently; which the children thought they had found in the Land of Memory, only to have it turn black when they went away; which they found again in the Garden of Dreams—where, indeed, the very air was azure with them—only to lose when Light met them; which, at last, they found in a cage at their own cottage door and saw grow bluer and bluer when they shared it with

Madam Berlingot's sick little daughter—this is a perfect example of symbolism.

All the concrete symbols in "The Blue Bird"—solid, platitudinous old Bread, dreadfully afraid of anything strange or dangerous; sanctimonious Sugar; Milk, Water, Fire, Light; the lovely Hours dancing out of the clock—all these make an enchanting sort of walking poetry. And there are moments, like that in the Kingdom of the Future—of the children yet unborn—where the little fellow, who has to be a hero and fight injustice on earth, hangs back, reluctant to go, with a poignant thrust which ordinary words can scarce describe.

On the other hand, that "prolonged, powerful, crystalline vibration heard to rise and swell as Time comes to open the gates for the children"; "the cerulean whirl of wheels, disks, and as yet unnamed objects," as the unborn inventors set their ideal machines going—phrases like these, powerfully as they may stir the reader's imagination, are more or less impossible to express on the stage.

Then, again, there is the practical difficulty that the burden of the play rests on the necessarily unauthoritative acting of two little chil-

dren. Take the graveyard scene, for instance; the reader feels the creepy terror which seizes the children as the moment comes for the dead to rise from their graves.

MYTYL (cowering against TYLTYL): They are coming out! They are coming out! (Then from all the gaping tombs there rises gradually an efflorescence at first frail and timid, like steam; then white and virginal and more and more tufty, more and more tall and plentiful and marvellous. Little by little, irresistibly invading all things, it transforms the graveyard into a sort of fairy-like and nuptial garden, over which rise the first rays of the dawn. The dew glitters, the flowers open their blooms, the wind murmurs in the leaves, the bees hum, the birds wake and flood the air with the first raptures of their hymns to the sun and to life. Stunned and dazzled, TYLTYL and MYTYL, holding each other by the hand, take a few steps among the flowers while they seek for the trace of the tombs.)

MYTYL (looking in the grass): Where are the dead? TYLTYL (looking also): There are no dead. . . .

Lines like these boom and rumble, as it were. It is hard for an unprepared audience to get their real import from two squeaky-voiced little girls standing among limelit canvas lilies.

The players, no less than the writers, have their trouble in striking the proper fantastic note. When "The Blue Bird" was played here at the New Theatre, the matter-of-fact—even snippishly cynical—Fairy Berylune seemed an example of this. Berylune had a hooked nose and a humped back, but everybody knows that good fairies are lovely princesses underneath. Naturally, Berylune insisted on her beauty.

"And my hair, do you see that?" and she holds out two lean gray wisps. "It's fair as the corn in the fields; it's like virgin gold! . . . And I've such heaps and heaps of it that it weighs my head down. . . . A little? Sheaves! Armfuls! Clusters! Waves of gold!"

This isn't joking. It is the very battle-cry of idealism—the children's own brave gift of make-believe. Wonder and mystery and beauty—the beauty of Melisande herself leaning from her window in the moonlight—must be thrown into it, hinted at somehow. Mrs. Hale snipped off the whole scene exactly as if she were playing a dry, satirical, old-maidish part in realistic comedy, and these children were the proper target for humorous irony—exactly, as far as point of view went, as she used to play Prossy in "Candida." It was just this necessary note of tenderness and wonder which made Miss

Wycherly's Light in the same play so pleasing—perhaps because Miss Wycherly, in some of the poetic Irish plays, had had experience with a similar sort of thing before.

The climax of the first act of Maeterlinck's "Mary Magdalene," in which the voice of Christ is heard, is typical of this difference between drama acted and drama read. "An incomparable silence, in which it seems as though the birds and the leaves of the trees and the very air that is breathed take part, falls with all its supernatural weight upon the countryside, and in this silence, which weighs upon people on the terrace also, there rises, absolute sovereign of space and the hour, a wonderful voice, soft, and all-powerful, intoxicated with ardor, light, and love, distant and yet near to every heart and present in every soul." In the theatre all the spectator hears, of course, is an ordinary stage voice speaking from the wings.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is described with great eloquence by the Roman witnesses, and we hear how "women, children, and especially the older men, exulted frantically. It was as though they were trampling on death which the god had just conquered and

laid low for the first time since man came into existence." Yet when Lazarus appears, a pale and melancholy young man, this exultant note is lost. On the other hand, if he came romping on the stage, alive and beaming, the spectator's instinct (which has nothing to do with what he may know) would promptly object that such a healthy man never really was dead.

The difficulty of expressing a poetic idea in the visual action of the stage has been too frequently pointed out to need elucidation here. What is generally called "poetic drama," with its artificial speech, lack of dramatic progress, and the long descriptive passages once needed to supply the atmosphere and now produced with scenery and electric lighting, is likely to be scarcely more than an interesting curiosity on the modern stage. There is no less poetry, the appeal is no less emotional, and carries us no less deeply into the inner beauties, ironies, and meanings of life-and Ibsen, Barrie, and Synge all carry us in their different ways but the form, if not prose, is at least less often epic, closer to our natural speech and mood.

Stephen Phillips has succeeded in joining

what might be called old-fashioned poetic drama to the contemporary stage, and in such a play as "Herod" it almost seems his natural mode of expression; his blank verse is, at least, no cloak for mere literariness, for vacuity that would be unmasked in prose. He does not merely label pale abstractions and ask us to accept them as great because they bear great names. His Herod has a quality of greatness. When the mob breaks into his palace he meets it, bluffs and bullies it back, as a capable tyrant would. And when he stalks down among them at last and thunders, "These veins are rivers! And these arteries are very roads! This body is your country!" and dares any of them to strike, the spectator is convinced that were he one of the mob he, too, would slink away.

It is at the moment that the Queen is being murdered—"Herod shall kill the thing he loves best"—that Cæsar's messenger arrives to announce the new territory granted Herod, and the latter, drunk with exultation, bounds up the stairs toward the golden doors behind which Mariamne lies dead, shouting out the news: "Hippo, Samaria and Godara and high-

walled Joppa!" There is a real fight between his love for Mariamne and his lust for power—as real as to-day's story of some ruthless speculator who corners the wheat market and loses his wife's affection. Lifted, as it is, into the region of poetry, it yet comes across the footlights in the quick action and compact, highly vitalized speech necessary for the stage.

Observe the adroit movement of this first act. The young priest, Mariamne's brother, all radiance and joy, is borne in by the acclaiming populace. Herod watches, eyes smouldering with suspicion. Gradually we see these suspicions fanned to flame. The boy, dear as he is to Mariamne, must be killed. He starts for the bathing pool. Does he know the waters? Oh, yes, quite well. But are there no rushes that might pull him down? He fears no rushes, he is a strong swimmer. And away he goes, followed, at a sign from Herod, by Sohemus, the sinister Gaul.

And then Mariamne enters and entreats Herod—who is going to meet the Romans that night—to spend these last moments with her. They talk fondly in the fading daylight and walk up the steps through the golden

doors in each other's arms. Twilight comes, and with it some of Mariamne's maidens emerge from the palace to breathe the first evening's coolness. The irony becomes more grim, as, with the tragedy still in suspense, they dreamily welcome the coming night. You can fairly feel the baked walls and the burden of the tropic day in their faint voices and languid gestures. The night-breeze begins to stir-"There is mercy from the West"-and one of them, leaning back toward it, laughs in low delight as it lifts her hair. Another throws out her arms—this whole scene is a striking example of poetic description given the necessary semblance of action—and breathes in "the low long a-a-ah of foliage."

The maidens vanish and Mariamne and the King come out into the night. Can anything weaken her love for him? Herod demands again and again. And far in the distance a faint moaning is heard, which comes nearer and nearer until the body of Mariamne's brother is brought in, followed by its mourners. Throughout, Mr. Phillips not only writes as a poet but as one thoroughly able to use the special technic of the stage.

Such a scene as that in the last act of "Peer Gynt," where the incorrigible old egoist, returning home, at last, after his lifetime of self-ishness, is confronted, in the shape of withered leaves flying before the wind and cold drops dripping from branches of dead trees, with the tears he should have shed, the songs he might have sung—is frankly poetry, scarcely intended for the stage.

The more common characteristic of Ibsen, however, is his genius for revealing almost limitless imaginative backgrounds through the simplest surfaces. We do not see the train wrecked on the stage and the heroine rescued in the nick of time, but when a maid-servant in an adjoining room makes a slight exclamation and a woman on the stage raises her arms and whispers "Ghosts!" the audience is held as if the author had it by a literal throat.

Behind the tangible result looms the remote spiritual cause, through the visible action is always felt the play of vaster, vaguer forces. And the creepiness of these forces is increased by the untheatrical surfaces through which we see them. It is as if they came rumbling through in spite of the author's and actors'

determination to be absolutely natural and matter-of-fact. Whether he is using a sort of reverse pantograph, as he did in "Rosmers-holm"—where, behind the drama on the stage, we see the outline of a larger drama which happened years ago—or whether he is employing out-and-out symbolism, Ibsen is master magician of the "hidden meaning." No one else can combine with the same acrid force the visible and invisible, and with a few plain-spoken words clutch the very souls of his hearers and make them squirm.

Not every one enjoys squirming, of course. One of the characters in Pinero's "Trelawney of the Wells" objected to the modern drama because it "reminded him of his relatives." Most of Ibsen's plays do more than that; they remind one of one's self. It was not the exploding boilers, three-alarm fires, and so on that interested him, but the dramas that went on inside people's heads—those "little gnawing things," as the Rat Wife said, which are so much worse than the things that get into the papers. As nearly every one has such things in his house, Ibsen's plays hit people "where they lived"; and as he felt, moreover, that the

safe-breakers, cutthroats, and pop-gun ruffians generally had been shivered at long enough, and that it was time to give the so-called heroes a chance, and show how much misery they may cause with their generally approved ideas like patriotism or self-sacrifice, shrieks of anguish and protest promptly filled the air. A smasher of idols, he turned people's sentimentalities against themselves, and this seemed a sort of treason and excessively "unpleasant" before the idea was grasped that a tonic need not become a complete diet, nor negative criticism a programme of life. When this is understood, the appetite for Ibsen grows with what it feeds on. One welcomes that acrid flavor after the usual sweets; there is a fascination in those harmless-looking surfaces which might well bear warnings: "Look out! Live wire!"

The first act of "The Master Builder" is an excellent example of Ibsen's skill in combining subtleties within subtleties with the simplest, most understandable—and playable—technic—a fact brought home to me with curious force one day when I saw it played at a "benefit," sandwiched in between a scene from

musical comedy and an act from some rattling, mechanical farce. The gnawing things in Master Builder Solness's house, it will be remembered, are those found under many another man's roof, artist or no-the neverending struggle to grasp the unattainable, dread of the day when he must give way to younger men. Nor has Solness paid his price alone. The two Broviks, father and son, also architects, are in his employ. The father he has forced out of business, the son he will not permit to do original work lest he become a rival. Then there is Kaia, Brovik's niece, bookkeeper for Solness, and although engaged to young Brovik, fairly worshipping the Master Builder and trembling if he so much as looks at her. And there is Aline, Solness's wife.

When they were just starting out in life, her mother's house, which had been given them to live in, burned down. All the old portraits were burned on the walls, the old silk dresses, her mother's and grandmother's lace—no other house could be quite the same to Mrs. Solness. The fright, and the fever into which she fell afterward, shook her terribly. Their

two little boys-babies then-died. They never had any other children. Yet it was this very burning of the old house which gave the young builder his first start. It seemed, as he thought it over years after, as if his wife's vocation had to be stunted and crushed and shattered in order that his might force its way to a sort of great victory. "For you must know," Solness explained to Hilda, "that Aline—she, too, had a talent for building. Not houses and towers and spires—for building up the souls of little children, Hilda. For building up children's souls in perfect balance and in noble and beautiful forms. For enabling them to soar up into erect and full-grown human souls. That was Aline's talent. And there it all lies now-unused and unusable forever-of no earthly service to any onejust like the ruins left by a fire."

His wife, the Broviks, poor, trembling Kaia—all these had to be sacrificed to his work. "All that I have succeeded in doing, building, and creating, all the beauty, the security, cheerful comfort—ay, and magnificence too—all this I have to make up for, to pay for—not in money, but in human happiness. And

not with my own happiness only, but with other people's too. Yes, yes, do you see that, Hilda? That is the price which my position as an artist has cost me—and others. And every single day I have to look on while the price is paid for me anew. Over again, and over again—and over again forever!"

Such is the situation in the Master Builder's house as the play begins—just as the conviction begins to creep over Solness that a crisis is approaching, that at last his good luck is about to turn. Nonsense, says Doctor Herdal, the old architect's friend, what should make the luck turn? The younger generation, answers Solness firmly. The doctor tries to laugh these forebodings away, but Solness cannot be shaken.

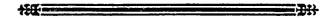
"The luck will turn," he repeats, "I know it. I feel the day approaching. Some one or other will take it into his head to say: 'Give me a chance!' And then all the rest will come clamoring after him and shake their fists at me and shout: 'Make room—make room—make room!' Yes, doctor, presently the younger generation will come knocking at my door—"

And at that instant, with a hundred vague potentialities crowding in on the audience's mind, there is a knock on the door and when it opens there stands a young girl, alpenstock in hand and a curiously bright look in her eyes, fresh as the morning, relentless as fate. Hilda is a flesh-and-blood girl then and throughout the play, and the new tower from which, after she has inspired him to build and climb it, Solness falls to his death, is, for purposes of the stage, a real tower. But she is the younger generation, too; the eternal and insatiable desire to create, to build higherwhat you will, depending on one's understanding and experience. Ibsen is, himself, the master builder in this sort of construction—this welding of the unseen to the visible action of the stage, so that the mere bright face of a young girl may be a tragedy, and a light tap on the door strike like a thunderbolt.



VΙ

SOME WOMEN PLAY-WRITERS



ONCE or twice in a season there bobs up a little play, by an unknown author, generally, and short-lived, which shows that very thing so many plays, even successful ones, lack—some understanding of the manners and customs of ordinary civilized people in such a city as New York. So far as this knowledge is concerned, many of them might have been composed by Patagonians or Eskimos.

A well-cast company and intelligent stage management may have as much to do with this quality as the author, but it is, at any rate, rare enough always to be noticed and gratefully remembered. Such a quiet little piece was "Keeping Up Appearances," by Mr. Butler Davenport, which appeared for a few evenings in the autumn of 1910.

We were admitted here to the hearthstone of a family trying to keep up rather ambitious

appearances on nothing a year. The mother, a woman of intellectual force and fine feeling, was its responsible member. To her fell the task of doing the sewing and otherwise making possible the social progress of her two clever but shallow daughters, to maintain the illusion of domestic happiness, although her rake of a husband found his pleasures elsewhere. The son, a boy in college, was her one real moral support.

Here was a situation with plenty of potential tragedy, and it was set forth and concluded with such naturalness and authenticity that those disturbed by the lack of such qualities (and I presume that critics are more so disturbed than the occasional theatregoer, who pays real money for his ticket and demands, perhaps not unnaturally, to be "thrilled" in return) might easily have been satisfied and forgotten that "Keeping Up Appearances" was scarcely, in the other's sense of the word, a play at all.

A little English play, Mr. Cosmo Hamilton's "The Blindness of Virtue," was pleasant for this same quality, as English plays—partly, doubtless, because of the more definite strati-

Some Women Play-Writers

fication of English society—are likely to be, especially when acted by an English company. We were taken into an English vicarage and made to feel at once not only that the author was familiar with its sheltered life, but that the players were, too. This might be the actual Vicar of East Brenton, Middlesex, and this his brisk, capable, tactful wife. So might Effie be his daughter, and young Mr. Archibald Graham, sent down to "read" with the Vicar, actually an Etonian and a recent student at Oxford. The clothes worn by the two women the gray sweater, the simple cotton dress-no appeal to the gallery here-were just such things as simple, well-bred folk, sure of their position, might be expected to wear at home in the country.

While such things have little to do with dramatic values—and the play itself was scarcely more than a tract—they have a good deal to do with the spectator's pleasure. It is pleasant to feel at home even in the theatre, and conceivable that more enjoyment may be found in the peaceful, even parochial, adventures of such genuine human beings than in the startling evolutions of the brassy savages

created, for instance, by a Mr. Henri Bernstein.

Mr. Charles Klein can be counted on to present vivid examples of how not to make characters behave, "gripping" as his situations sometimes may be. The inmates of his Fifth Avenue "mansions" ne'er existed on sea or land, and his politer characters generally, in their more offhand colloquial moments, seem to be quoting from bad editorials.

Young Stedman, in "The Daughters of Men," was as likely as not in the middle of an impassioned love-scene to interject a hundredword speech beginning: "The great masses are utterly ignorant of the," etc., etc. The heroine in "The Lion and the Mouse," returning from Europe to find her father—a judge who had incurred a capitalist's displeasure by handing down decisions adverse to corporate interests -shoved off into a shabby suburb, endeavored to cheer him with a "How I dislike New York, with its retinue of servants and its domestic and social responsibilities." When the shopgirl's employer, in "Maggie Pepper," offered to still the unfounded gossip about them by making her his wife, "The thought of duty,

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reparation, or moral compulsion as a motive for marriage," etc., etc., delivered in Miss Rose Stahl's best "Say, Kid, on the level!" tone—was what the slangy Maggie was sup-

posed to say.

Mr. J. E. Goodman's play, "Mother," genuine in many ways, was marred by just such ineptitude. The theme was a mother's loveblind, complete—for her children, and getting a firm hold on this, the author kept pegging at it until the aisles were fairly running with happy tears. Yet the charming daughter just from college displayed a strident slanginess which might have been acquired at some School for Female Boiler Makers. The air was filled with such gems as "Is there anything between you?"-"Well, it beats everything, don't it?"-"Looks like he had a case on her!" And the mother, with what was apparently intended as engaging homeliness, came in from mixing pie-crust in the kitchen to brush her flour-covered fingers on the parlor carpet.

The importance of such things lies not, of course, in their lack of refinement, but in their untruth. These particular people would not

have acted thus, and the author found wrong in one place is suspected in another.

If there were more women playwrights and stage-managers, this quality of domestic authenticity might not be so rare—if a woman had been the author of "Mother," for instance, the mother of the play would not, one surmises, have attempted to win the sympathy of her audience in quite that pie-crusty way. Yet the successful plays by women on our stage of late years have dealt, interestingly enough, less with the quiet but tragic situations encountered by ordinary husbands and wives in the mere business of living than with farce, like "Seven Days" or "Baby Mine" (the warm motherliness and quaint fancy of Miss Eleanor Gates's "The Poor Little Rich Girl" is an exception) or with the adaptation to the stage of more serious situations which other women have already set forth in novels.

The conjunction of novelist and play carpentress, as in Miss Charlotte Thompson's adaptation of Mrs. Deland's "The Awakening of Helena Ritchie" and Kate Douglas Wiggin's "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," has often, however, been most happy and now and then brought out those very qualities which in the ordinary man's play are so often missed.

Miss Alcott's "Little Women," which Miss Marion De Forest and Miss Jessie Bonstelle turned into a play, was an especially interesting example of this. It isn't often at the theatre that we get a chance to look into a characteristic American home. Very few stage people appear to have been "raised" anywhere. They simply spring, full-grown, from the incandescent dome of the author of the play. They have, so to speak, no relatives, no home towns. Vivid and impressive, often, when looked at from the front, a little examination reveals that they are all length and breadth and no thickness. They do not reach into anything.

Here the usual thing was reversed. Here was a great deal of family and only a little play—here was the home which the people in so many of our plays seem never to have known.

Among the weird stage ladies Broadway knows so well—the cream-puff variety, on the one hand, or the shrieking sort, who keep waving their sex at the world as a Dutch windmill

waves its arms in half a gale—there was something peculiarly refreshing in the sight and sound of a girl like Jo—devoted, ardent, yet clear-headed and clean-hearted, and as amusingly disdainful of the obviously sentimental as a schoolboy playing football. Something of the "earnest of the north wind" was felt whenever she spoke—something often forgotten in the brassy glare of Broadway. As a contribution to dramatic art, "Little Women" was of little importance; as a contribution to civilization through the medium of the stage, something for the whole family, big and little, to enjoy, very important indeed.

The more successful original plays by American women have inclined toward farce, and if these differed from similar work by men the difference lay, perhaps, in a certain ruthlessness toward their own sex and toward matters likely to be treated by men sentimentally. Both Miss Margaret Mayo's "Baby Mine" and Mrs. Rida Johnson Young's "The Lottery Man" seemed to give point to Mr. Kipling's pleasantries about "the deadlier sex."

In "The Lottery Man" a great deal of the supposed fun was at the expense of a pain-

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fully emaciated female, companion of a fat woman trying to "reduce" and winner of the lottery ticket supposed to entitle her to a husband (a young newspaper man, in order to get a "story," had raffled himself off at one dollar a chance). In real life the poor creature would be pathetic, to say the least, but here her physical imperfections, her not unnatural desire for a husband, and the blandishments she lavished on the unhappy hero were exploited by the relentless authoress to the last degree.

In Miss Mayo's play, which enjoyed an enormous commercial success, a young married couple separate after a trifling quarrel and the husband goes to live in another city. The wife, a silly little person whose shallowness and petty deceptions have brought about the trouble with her more earnest husband, is soon overwhelmed with loneliness. She has a council of war with her best friend and they concoct this brilliant plan—they will borrow a baby from the foundling's home and send word to the husband that he has become a father.

The plan succeeds only too well. The enthusiastic father arrives before the baby. He

has scarcely been put off long enough for an infant to be secured, before the Italian mother, from whom it was unceremoniously borrowed, wildly demands it back. Ere a second baby can be substituted the astonished but still delighted father enters and finds that he is the parent of twins. This is no sooner explained than the second baby's real father-a husky Irish truck driver—demands his offspring and again before a successful substitution can be made the dazed but still happy young man finds three children on his hands. And finally, after the well-meaning friend has been arrested as a Black-Hand kidnapper, and the real and the false parents are brought together in a farcically tempestuous scene, the curtain goes down, as the young husband, giving a last shriek of bewilderment, discovers that he has no children at all.

The farcical possibilities of the idea are obvious, and Miss Mayo, who knows the stage backward and forward, handled them with ingenuity and the crispest technic. The piece was played with great snap and spirit, and if one could abide the distressing vulgarity of the pretended mother it might have made an

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agreeable, as it certainly did an hilarious, evening's entertainment.

One could imagine a suburban settlement, one of those cloistered regions of quiet green lawns and baby carriages, where such a piece might be written and played by the members of a Young Mothers' Club as a refreshing protest against a too-continuous restriction to the society of sterilized bottles and modified milk. So might the officers in some lonely army post during a Christmas blizzard concoct a roaring farce on the subject of throwing down your guns and running away from the enemy.

Broadway is another sort of place, and it was another thing to hear motherhood ridiculed through three acts by a shallow-pated coquette, quite ready to assume its appearances as she would use rouge or some new scent to arouse the languid ardor of her husband. And to see this precious young woman powder her nose and bounce joyfully into her pink bed with a "Now turn my rose-lights on me!" and, with the audience honking its appreciation, dispose herself in the fashion best suited to allure them and appeal to the sympathies of a susceptible father, was calculated to get

a bit too much on one's nerves to permit of that open mind necessary to the enjoyment even of farce.

Miss Mayo, who is Mrs. Edgar Selwyn, was also author of that genial little piece, "Polly of the Circus." The little bareback rider's mother had been killed by falling from a trapeze after riding bareback for years. "Now what d'you think o' that?" she demanded, "Off a trapeze—and the best rider in the business! Of course—Pop, he was killed in the lion's cage. But that was legitimate. That's where he worked." There was much of this quaint and sympathetic interpretation of the "professional" point of view—a kindly use of the stage, amusing and worth while.

While men play-writers often stumble when they venture into kitchens and quiet sitting-rooms and matters women better understand, it is seldom that the discord is so excruciating as that struck now and then by a clever lady, when, relying on her technic, she dashes into a region peculiarly masculine, smiling and unafraid. Mrs. Rida Johnson Young has made almost a specialty of this sort of exploration, and national guardsmen, undergraduates, and

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professional baseball players have all enjoyed feminization at her hands.

It was in "Brown of Harvard" that Mrs. Young attained her most eerie flight. It is the custom, or used to be, at any rate, in the days when 'busses still were running from the bank to Mandalay, for the fortunate undergraduates who occupied rooms in Holworthy occasionally to descend into the Yard and indulge in what was known—out of regard for the traditions of the outside world—as "student-lifeon-the-grass." As an amusement it was comparatively austere. One leaned against an elm-tree or lay looking up at the sky, listening to the shuffle of feet as the men went to and from lectures, and wondered if it was really true that Oxford was the only place in the world where loafing could be made a fine art. Of course, the thing could be overdone, and it was expedient, in order to disarm the vaguely deprecating glances of passers-by, occasionally to nod to them and smile, as who should say, "'Tis but for the momentand in play."

In Mrs. Young's play all this was changed. The soul-depressing self-consciousness of the

old days was gone, the student body had all the animation and care-free air of musical comedy. The angle founded by Holworthy. Stoughton, and the vista of the gymnasium had become a sort of "Busy Corner." Here the undergraduates gathered of a morning and indulged in glees and dances; here the unfortunate young woman discussed with the errant wooer the likelihood of his "doing the right thing"; here the young heroine, from one of Boston's Brahmin families, was made love to and embraced, while a male chorus in the distance sang "Fair Harvard." In the play Miss Ames was the young lady; young Mr. Tom Brown-known to his intimates as "Kid," and presently to step into the 'varsity boat at an instant's notice and stroke the crew to victory—was the fortunate young man.

"What do you like most about me?" inquired Miss Ames as they stood in front of Holworthy.

"My arms," replied that spirited young man, suiting the action to the word. It was at this moment, perhaps, with "Fair Harvard" coming through the relentless sunshine

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from round the corner of Stoughton, that one felt most strongly the mutations of time.

Brown was a noble fellow. He helped a poor "grind" through college without letting him know who was doing it, and lent money to Miss Ames's brother, who replied by forging Brown's check. It was Ames who got the grind's sister into trouble, and, when the grind had developed into a stroke-oar, tried to throw the race to the English crew by forcing him to desert just before the race. This was the great moment of the play. The youth and beauty of Boston and Cambridge were gathered at the Harvard boat-house, the great race (somewhat contrary to precedent) being rowed directly in front of it. Just as the crew, with the footlights illuminating their bare legs, were about to leave the boat-house, Thorne, the grind stroke, received a letter. The villain hoped to unnerve him by revealing the truth about his sister and the fact that she had suddenly left town.

Thorne tore his hair and bolted in pursuit. What to do? Who should save the day? Why not Brown? Ah—the Kid! Brown—BROWN!! Brown appeared at the head of

the dressing-room staircase, one hand pressed to his forehead, the other-like Monna Vanna in the tent—clasping his bath-robe about his throat. He leaned over the stairs, feverishly gripped and slid along the balustrade-like Miss Marlowe in "Barbara Frietchie"—as he begged that this great honor might not be thrust upon him. The Cantabrigians, however, with their fatal tendency to put only the socially eligible in the boat, insisted that he should stroke them. What—me? Ah—no— NO! What? Well-then here's to dear old Harvard! And throwing off the bath-robe. Brown bounded down the stairs and joined the crew. As the race was rowed on the tortuous Charles, through Cambridgeport, it must have been mostly invisible to the spectators, but, with characteristic Harvard indifference, they kept right on shouting until victory was declared and the gifted Brown borne back on the shoulders of his crew mates, kissing his hands to the ladies in the boat-house gallery.

It seemed at the time that something ought to be done—that somebody should organize a society. In spite of the shrieks from Cam-

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bridge, however, the piece was liked by thousands and played with commercial success all over the country.

Miss Rachel Crothers differs from some of her sister playwrights—the adapters and the authors of farce—in combining with a knowledge of stage technic the positive convictions of a thinking woman of her day. She writes, that is to say, not merely to amuse or to transfer to the theatre some one else's ideas, but to express definite convictions.

In her first play, "The Three of Us," she took her audience to a Nevada mining-camp and introduced them to a refreshingly genuine young woman, who was mothering one young brother, trying to curb the surly, head-strong nature of the other, managing the little household on nothing a year, and hanging on, meanwhile, to the mining claim their father had left them when he died. It took courage and tact and patience, and if the girl's life was brightened it was not simplified when two men, in their tiny, all-together settlement, fell in love with her.

In the tangle of events which followed she was discovered by the one she loved, under

ambiguous circumstances dear to stage tradition, in the other man's room. The situation was as old as the hills, but not so Miss Crothers's handling of it, and it was characteristic of what then (1906) might have been called her "advanced" ideas that the girl was not in the least dismayed and declined to explain, feeling that if the man could not trust that she was there for some good and sufficient reason he might go his way.

"The Coming of Mrs. Patrick," which followed this little comedy, was particularly interesting in its first act.

The curtain rose on a darkened room—the melancholy front parlor of an old-fashioned New York house. Through the gloom the audience discerned black-walnut furniture upholstered in shabby red plush; an ancient square piano, which must never be opened because the invalid's room was just overhead; two large chromo landscapes in heavy frames; a fireplace mantel, iron, apparently, and painted and grained an atrocious brown to represent marble; upon it two statuettes of the pre-Rogers period. Outside, the stage wind whistled deliciously; occasional bits of

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sleet slapped the window-pane. Obviously, little "joy of living" here.

Entered Billy Lawton, the son, grumbling. No servants to open the door, fire almost out, dinner not ready. He lit the gas, making the gloomy room more gloomy. Entered Mr. Lawton, a sort of dried codfish, humorless, melancholy. He slumped down by the fire, now almost out, and slowly rubbed his stiff old hands. Entered the younger daughter, Nina, and her good-fellow friend Miss Pauline Shank, of Chicago, just in from the matinée-still nibbling chocolates, crazy about the hero, wishing they could go on the stage. Entered, from her invalid mother's room above, Eleanor, the older daughter. The responsibilities of this unbeautiful household were on her shoulders, and they had narrowed and hardened rather than sweetened her. The constant care of her mother had become a sort of task which she hugged to herself in a sort of egoism of selfrenunciation, oppressed by it, yet jealous of surrendering it. "If"-so the Chicago girl suggested-"some man would kiss Eleanor good and hard once, I think she'd be all right for the rest of her life."

Into this ghastly front parlor, her entrance duly led up to by the admiring Doctor Bruce, entered at last the nurse, Mrs. Patrick, bubbling over with cheerfulness, tact, vitality, and wholesome womanliness. In a few minutes she had the fire blazing, a cushion behind old Mr. Lawton's shoulders, light glowing from the long unused reading-lamp. Billy decided to stay at home instead of going to a show. The old piano was opened, Miss Shank played a waltz, and Nina danced merrily.

Then Eleanor, who had withdrawn for a moment, re-entered—the original Lady Coldfront. She was jealous of Mrs. Patrick—jealous of the doctor's admiration for her, irritated by the cheerfulness which had bloomed directly after her arrival. The playing stopped. The air chilled again. Mrs. Patrick might then go up-stairs to the invalid. So up they went, these two—selfishness, morbid sense of duty, repression; love, freedom, cheerful self-expression—the clashing motives of the play. The Ibsenites were all a-twitter as the curtain went down.

In the next scene conventional melodrama poked up its battered head and the fine, self-

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contained note was lost, although the final message of the piece, that happiness comes from expression rather than repression, giving rather than holding back, was thoroughly in tune with the author's point of view.

In "A Man's World" Miss Crothers presented a woman novelist, Frank Ware, and a newspaper publisher, Malcolm Gaskell, a strong man who knew what he wanted and generally got it. He loved the novelist and wanted to marry her.

No play of the year, perhaps, introduced characters more promising than these two—the sophisticated yet charming, intellectual woman and the publisher accustomed to getting what he wanted. Apparently, we were about to meet new issues and enter a very modern world—the world of a Mrs. Pankhurst or Mrs. Humphry Ward, for instance, a Mr. Harmsworth or Mr. Hearst.

The novelist had adopted a child some years before in Paris, when the unfortunate girl who had brought it into the world died, deserted by its father. The little boy was almost like her own son, and she firmly believed that his father had committed the worst offence of

which a man could be guilty. It was after she had admitted her own love for Gaskell that both discovered that he was the boy's father.

He made out a good case for himself, as such cases go. And what was done was done; it was not right that the happiness of two more lives should be destroyed. To the doubts that would not down—that he would not have forgiven her were the tables turned and that she never could escape the memory of his brutal selfishness—he answered:

"This is a man's world. Man sets the standard for woman. He knows she's better than he is, and he demands that she be—and if she isn't she's got to suffer for it. That's the whole business in a nutshell."

It was on this familiar issue rather than on any new one growing out of their work in the world that the action turned. The promised horizons scarcely opened further. Miss Crothers stuck to her colors, nevertheless, and toward the time when men and women may have more nearly the same moral code, because women will tolerate nothing less, the play advanced at least one step. The woman

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declined to yield her convictions and sent the man away as the curtain fell.

And one bit of sympathetic realism—the unsuccessful girl artist-deserved special mention. It was a type familiar enough in New York or Paris or wherever misdirected young people gather to study art. Her rattle-brained talk about "her art," the untidiness she mistook for "temperament," her futile clinging to the skirts of her snobbish relatives while trving to be "bohemian," was only too true to life. And Miss Helen Ormsby played the part -absurdities and all-with relentless sincerity. Indeed, the moment in which she gave way to the realization that she had thrown away ten years of her life, that she was homely, without talent, that no man had ever proposed to her or ever would, that she was indispensable to no one, had a simple, tragic force compared with which the elaborated horrors of a "Madame X," for instance, seemed artificial enough.

For her it was, indeed, a man's world. Any little failure of a man, she said, could persuade some sort of good girl to marry him and have a home and a place in the world of

his own. Nobody wanted her, and there was nothing she could get a grip on. "I almost wish," she cried, "that I was pretty—and could have my fling—and then die."

In "Ourselves" Miss Crothers continued her plea for an equal moral code with even more determination and dramatic effect. This was the story of a fight to redeem a girl of the streets, defeated, just as it seemed about to succeed, by the brother of the young woman into whose home the girl had been taken. The young man was happily married but had his own ideas about the liberties he might take with women, provided, as he expressed it, they meant nothing to him, involved "nothing personal to himself."

Without sentimentality, yet with penetrating sympathy and intuition—the crisp, ironic touch of a good police reporter combined with the deeper understanding of a Jane Addams—Miss Crothers brought out the pathetic ignorance of the girl and most of her kind: their lack of realization of what they had done, the unutterably drab and meaningless lives they started with, their poor, passionate yearning and groping for happiness. In the reform

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"home," in which the first act was laid, the audience saw them—restless, headstrong, fighting. A stupid immigrant girl explained, in her lunk-headed, ingenuous way, how she got where she was—tricked by almost the first man she met when she arrived, alone, in this country. Another made it clear why a girl of the streets would even stick to the man who drove her there and took her money. At least he was a man, and hers—"somebody to come home to."

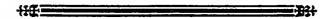
The husband's case, also, was put fairly and even eloquently. To his final outburst that his wife and he might as well face the facts—they were different creatures altogether, and a woman could not understand the strength of instincts that had mastered him—the wife answered that they were not, in that sense, different, and that if she and generations of women before her had not trained themselves in self-control she would now be as ungoverned as he. The play throughout was the statement of a conviction, but the passionate statement of it, fused into dramatic action; the work of a woman of sophisticated intelligence and fine feeling who brought to the re-

volt shared by most American women of her class the power of expression generally supposed to belong to men.



VII

TEN-TWENTY-THIRTY



THE theatres are closed for the summer and the empty seats covered with chintz. Gone from one's morning paper are first-night reviews, gone the lines of automobiles in the cross streets at night; audience and critics have been turned out to grass. Everybody, in short, being out of town and the theatrical season quite over, I suddenly find myself, with various thousands of other non-existent persons, going busily to the theatre.

There are plenty of us; we comfortably fill two of the largest theatres in town—the old Academy of Music and the old Grand Opera House—for two performances every day. In the last few weeks we have seen "The Great Divide," "Zaza," "Trilby," "The Man of the Hour," "The Count of Monte Cristo," and "Romeo and Juliet." There is a new play each week at each theatre, and some of them —Mr. Fitch's "The City," for instance—were but yesterday appearing for the first time on

Broadway. We see them decently played—as well as by the average "second" company on the road—not to speak of moving pictures and illustrated songs between the acts, and, if it is Friday afternoon, at Mr. Corse Payton's theatre, pink tea with the company on the stage after the show.

There is a peculiar, even an esoteric, fascination about these entertainments not residing entirely in the thirty cents one pays for a matinée orchestra seat. The loftiest need not be bored. Nowhere, perhaps, can one so measure a play's essential dramatic, or at least theatrical, spark. Gone is the feverish charm of the first night; gone that sense of escape, of warmth and security, lent to the playhouse by the mere bleakness of a winter night. The author's work is stripped of every factitious help, revealed in its bare, unillumined bones.

Imagine yourself, if you please, in the musty cavern of the old Academy, or the Grand Opera House, on a hot July afternoon. Trolley-cars are banging away outside; the blue sky calling one to the country. From the open balcony doors above, the hard, disil-

lusioning sunlight comes streaming in. You can hear the sparrows twittering up there. All about is an audience, quaintly remote from those before whom the play was originally tried—fat women in wilted shirt-waists; flippant girls chewing gum; boys and men who, one vaguely feels, ought to be at work somewhere. Boys drone up and down the aisles—"Fresh candies, chocolates," and so on. An odor of spearmint floats in an atmosphere already redolent of talcum powder and stale perfume.

The sunshine, falling from a balcony window, strikes the back hair of the woman in front of you and reveals, scantily enmeshed therein, an unmatching and unmatchable "rat." The lady on her right, lifting an arm in friendly fashion, adjusts the side nearest her. The lady on the left, from her side, offers a similar friendly service. Neither succeeds, and finally all three dismiss the matter as unimportant—it's only a bargain matinée—we're all friends—what's the difference, anyhow? The orchestra saws off its overture, up-stairs an usher tardily shuts the fire-escape doors and removes most of the sunlight. You

fold up your afternoon paper, and, with a mind full of Mexican news, view the rising curtain.

Into this hostile, or at least inert and wholly indifferent, atmosphere, at the hands of players whose skill or awkwardness will receive no word of praise or blame in tomorrow's papers, who played Shakespeare last week perhaps and will play Mrs. Elinor Glyn next, as part of the day's hard work, is projected a fabric of dramatic art about which the whole town was talking six months or perhaps a generation ago. Critics have sifted it, actors and author had their moment of fame; thousands of people (gone now, goodness knows where) have laughed and cried over it, been lifted out of themselves, to go home and think about it for days; and here it is coming over the footlights into the banal peppermint-scented twilight of the summer afternoon.

It is a terrific strain to put a play to—a strain which breaks down everything except that built to breathe the special and peculiar atmosphere of the theatre. Even though the matter be absurd, it must at least be to the

manner born. No atmospheric stage-manager here to beguile the drifting eye; no fondly applauded "star." There must be a "situation," or what appears to be one; two wills clashing together; words that lead and parry, words with a "punch" behind them, if they are to get across. I have wondered if a course at the ten-twenty-thirty plays might not be an excellent experience for young playwrights better acquainted with literature than with the special needs of the theatre.

Listen, for instance, in "The Man of the Hour," to the young reform mayor and the boss who nominated him and thought that he could control him. The independent young man is busy in his office. The boss comes

shouldering in.

"I understand Phelan's been to see you," he growls, referring to the rival boss. "What for?"

"Business."

"Whose business?"

"My business!" and the young man goes on with his writing.

Dialogue with bounce to it—"actor-proof," as they say. An important franchise is under

consideration. The mayor intends to veto it. The boss intends to jam it through. He shows that persons friendly to the young man are behind the bill.

"That's no news," mutters the mayor.

"Well, then," bellows the boss, "maybe this is!"

The fortune of the girl to whom the mayor is engaged, and of her brother, is invested in stock which may go to smash if the bill is vetoed. The young man starts back aghast.

"Now veto it if you will and be damned to you!" thunders the boss. The young mayor seizes his pen and writes.

"What have you done?" sneers the boss. "Did you veto it?"

"I vetoed it. And be damned to you!" cries the young mayor, and down goes the curtain.

If the value of robustness and resilience stands out more clearly in an unelaborate performance of this sort, so, too, do tricks and artifices. Observe the gray-haired old doorkeeper toddle in and disclose the fact that he served in the Civil War under the young mayor's father.

"So you served under my father," says the young man. "Do you remember him?" Ah—it is coming! "As if it were yesterday," quavers the dear old doorkeeper. Slow music begins, and it doesn't take a clairvoyant to know that handkerchiefs will be out in a minute, the young mayor even more popular with the audience than he is now, and that no matter what the gentleman who plays the doorkeeper may do, he will bow himself respectfully out, convincing ninety people in every hundred in front that he is a magnificent character actor.

The mechanical precision with which an audience reacts—here, whenever the hero strikes an attitude and roars—would be continually astonishing did one not recall that people go to the theatre not only to be charmed and to forget, but to play a familiar game according to certain conventional rules. They are like people listening to an after-dinner speaker. When the latter, bowing and smiling, describes his delight at addressing so handsome, so cultured, so brilliant an audience, nobody is deceived into thinking that he is any more dazzling than before, but he

promptly applauds wildly and cries, "Yay-yay-yay!" because that is what he is supposed to do. That is what is done. And people get an amusement out of such things.

Some such partnership on the part of the audience must assist in preserving such relics as the familiar world-is-mine scene in "The Count of Monte Cristo." You will recall the underground dungeon, through whose momentarily transparent walls we see Edmond Dantès and the Abbé Faria, prisoners both for eighteen long years, with long white manes and white beards down to their waists.

Tunnelling to escape, they overhear the sentry talking overhead and realize that their plot is discovered. It is too much for the old Abbé, and, feeling that he is about to expire, he confides to Edmond the secret of the buried treasure and the entirely impossible scheme of escape that follows. It is the custom to dispose of those who die in this prison by tying them up in sacks, fastening a rock to their feet, and casting them into the sea. After the Abbé is dead, Edmond shall drag the body into his own cell, take the Abbé's place, and let himself be sunk in the ocean.

Once there, he will cut his way out with a knife the Abbé has kept conveniently hid, and swim away. And, although melodramatic conventions demand that the poor old prisoners be represented as so frail and doddering that they can scarce drag themselves about their dungeon, and the feat is one which only an acrobat in the pink of condition would think of attempting, you have but to turn down the lights, turn on the thunder and lightning, shake up the canvas waves, and have Dantès, restored by his salt-water dip to a robust leading man, climb up on his rock and bellow, "The world is mine!" to explode the whole house in a torrent of genuine applause.

Where mere dynamics are so important, finer things are naturally lost or not attempted. By finer, of course, one means those requiring a certain intellectual sophistication both for purposes of interpretation and of understanding. You can play "Romeo and Juliet" to a ten-twenty-thirty audience because its story has been lived by every one of them, according to his or her own experience, and it is the one thing in which most of

them are probably most keenly interested. And, indeed, I have seen a Romeo at the Academy of Music whose performance was truer to Elizabethan feeling and, to me, more entertaining than the pale and drooping staginess of the more scholarly Mr. Sothern.

This Romeo was a trifle smiley and saccharine, perhaps, but he fairly exuded youthful warmth and good feeling. He would put his hands on his friends' shoulders when Mercutio and Benvolio urged him, "Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance," and, laughing, say, "Not I, believe me; you have dancing shoes with nimble soles: I have a soul of lead, so stakes me to the ground I cannot move!"—and do this with a jolly, graceful languor, proud of himself and a little amused at himself.

Between the acts I asked one of the ushers who it was who was playing Romeo, as I saw it was not the regular leading man, whose name was on the programme.

"Who?" he demanded. "Why, that's the only man within two hundred miles of New York who can play Romeo or Hamlet or anything else at twenty-four hours' notice. That's

James Young, and he's what his name implies."

"You mean he is young?" I said. "Well," said the usher, "he's only got two or three gray hairs in his head at that. And, believe me, he's some actor!"

You can play Shakespeare, but not so easily Mr. J. M. Barrie (although Corse Payton announces "Peter Pan"); and still less easily, I should say, intellectual farce, or Maeterlinck, or the comedy of manners in which so much depends on finely finished little things. You get the melodrama of Ruth Jordan's capture in the first act of "The Great Divide," for instance, but the exaltation into which the new country had lifted the prim New Englander, the vivid desire for life which was, in a way, a sort of subconscious urging of her action, is scarcely brought out.

Generally speaking, of course, the leading lady doesn't want to waste her strength on that sort of thing. She has a delightfully "cagey" way of playing in a sort of emotional undertone until the curtain, or some other necessary climax, pulls out all the stops. And little wonder. She gets up every morning at

eight o'clock, we will say, as regularly as any office slave. At ten she is in the theatre rehearsing next week's play. Out for a bite of lunch, or perhaps a sandwich in her dressing-room, and then the matinée begins. Then, on Fridays, if it is in the Payton theatres, she must jump out of her costume directly the last curtain falls and into street clothes, and, by the time the simple-minded herd out in front have climbed on the stage, be standing behind a refreshment table dispensing lady's-fingers and pink lemonade. Then dinner and the evening performance. Lines, lines, lines to be learned, and a working-day that lasts from ten in the morning until eleven at night.

The orchestra plays a few bars from a popular waltz when she enters for the first time. She is always greeted by applause then, and often at each entrance, and the audience thoroughly approve everything she does. Perhaps it is because of this that she plays with an air of almost conscious virtue and benevolence, as if the rest of the cast were creatures of a lower world and only she and the audience really understood. She almost always has a contralto voice, which, when she wants to,

she can drop to delightfully thrilling and theatrical depths.

Your appetite becomes so whetted by her stand-offishness that you are ravished with delight when these moments come. I recall Miss Minna Phillips in the "Count of Monte Cristo." She was playing Mercedes, who married the wicked Fernand after Edmond, her sailor lover, went to prison. How sad and beautiful she looked in her white wig after those eighteen years of cruel separation! "I will kill him!" hissed Edmond, referring to the sprightly young Albert, now nearly eighteen. "No, you will not," said Madame Fernand, and from the drop of her voice we knew that something was coming. "You will not even fight him. Because-" "And why?" demanded Edmond. "Because

he

is

your

son!"

It was just after the pink tea and "Trilby" were over, and before she dashed out to get a little dinner and return for the evening's performance, that I managed to lasso Miss Phil-

lips for a moment's talk. They still have a sort of greenroom in the old Grand Opera House, and we sat there. Miss Phillips wore a dashing white tailored hat, she looked very healthy and cheerful, and I was impressed by the fact that she was many times more bright and animated off than on the stage.

Yes, she admitted briskly, it certainly was a busy life, but she liked it. Better than the road and better than free-lancing, so to speak, on Broadway. Perhaps I knew that she came from Australia and had been featured in several road productions before joining the stock company four years ago. She could make more money in stock than she could out of it. It wasn't so bad when you got into the routine; and the great thing, of course, was being in New York all the year round, practically, and having a home.

Of course, one thing that helped her was that she was such a good "study." She could pick up a rôle in no time. They got along beautifully together—like a happy family. Goodness gracious! Wouldn't they have to! Twelve performances a week and morning rehearsals. If they didn't get along they'd scratch out

each other's eyes. And no sweethearting, either —everybody minded his own business. Of course, you didn't have a hard rôle every week. Last week she was playing "Zaza" and this week "Trilby," and there was plenty to do in both of them. But next week, in the "Count of Monte Cristo" she would almost have a rest.

As I said good-by to the leading lady I found myself shaking hands with Mr. Joseph W. Girard, the company's "heavy." Mr. Girard is a tall, well-built gentleman with a pleasant expression and a fighting jaw. You would take him on the street for a successful cattleman or contractor rather than an actor. No turnedback cuffs or amethyst sleeve-links or handkerchief up his sleeve for Mr. Girard. No pink teas, either. "Not for me," he said grimly. Mr. Girard had just taken off the long Dundrearys which Taffy wears in "Trilby"-he was one of the "Troys anglayzes," as they were called in a French which added still another variety to the three kinds generally supposed to be extant-French, American, and West Point. I had seen Mr. Girard as the decadent old Duke de Brissac in "Zaza," as the villain in "The Still Alarm," and later I encountered

him again as the bare-throated sailor, Danglars, in "The Count of Monte Cristo" and as the wicked King of Sardalia in "Three Weeks," with a Russian beard, medals, a red nose, and high, shiny boots. One of the fascinations of stock-company acting is the chance it gives you to follow your friends through all sorts of character changes.

I asked Mr. Girard how many rôles he knew. He smiled deprecatingly down at his cigar. "Oh, I don't know," he said; "maybe about a hundred." Somebody here reminded the "heavy" of the time he was on the road with a company that had a repertory of eighteen plays. "Yes," assented Mr. Girard. "Put any of 'em on at a day's notice. They'd go ahead and bill us, and we'd give 'em whatever they liked." The "heavy" preferred stock too. He liked having a home, and as for hard work—"Why, look at those poor girls in burlesque shows. Two shows a day, and that is hard work."

Letting people choose their own plays is one of the devices of the ten-twenty-thirty houses. At the Academy of Music, where a stock company has been playing steadily since

last August, they send out some eight thousand circulars a week, merely to give their patrons a general notion of the next week's play. Often the audience chooses the plays to be put on, and subscribers have the same seats for one evening a week throughout the winter.

Mr. Girard told how the spectators in Brooklyn nodded to each other as they took their seats, and how you soon got to remember the faces out in front. And you couldn't fool the audience about the people on the stage. Send one of their favorites on in a pitch-dark scene as a detective or a burglar, and they'd recognize him, no matter what his disguise, and give him a hand. He didn't think much of "Trilby" for their sort of people. Too much Svengali, hypnotism, and evil-eye business. It got on the women's nerves—"all right for Broadway, maybe, but not for a family theatre."

Mr. Corse Payton has done more than any one else, probably, to make the ten-twenty-and-thirty cent theatre a family institution. He has been at it ten years now, and has four companies and something like a hundred play-

ers working for him. A Friday matinée such as I have mentioned is a veritable orgy of the sort of thing that such an audience genuinely likes. The pink tea is one of Mr. Payton's great ideas. A big sign in the lobby announces it as the crowd comes in. Corse himself issues another invitation from the stage just before the last act, and as soon as the curtain falls the crowd pile up on the stage by way of the lefthand boxes—fat ladies in shirt-waists, pounding the scenery to see how real it is; giggling young girls, half awed, half contemptuous, in this behind-the-scenes world. The flip young ushers, returned to their street clothes, keep the crowd moving past the refreshment-table and toward the stage door, murmuring, sotto voce, witticisms like "Come an' shake hands with your favorite actor," or "No, I don't like to eat watermelons-they get your ears so wet."

Then there is an orchestra, and between the acts moving pictures, if you are at the Academy; if at the Grand Opera House, a versatile young man, who shifts scenery or something at other times, comes out in front of the curtain and sings an illustrated song. There is a picture

on the screen of a girl in a pink dress in a garden, and the athletic young tenor cries:

> "Let's make love among the roses, dearie, You and I, Stealing little hugs and tender kisses On the sly."

After the chorus has been sung once or twice the words themselves are flashed on the curtain. The vague hum that has followed the song comes out more confidently on the spearmint-scented air—there is a sort of pathos in the sibilant s's in the twilight—and following the one man's voice are many feminine voices, a little off the key, perhaps, faltering, yet evidently in deadly earnest groping for the tune.

With some difficulty I cornered the restless Mr. Payton in his private office and tried to engage him in talk. He is a tallish, slender man, of forty-two perhaps, with the look of feeling very chipper in spite of having been out late the night before. "If Mr. Payton would open up," said his young business manager, gazing up at his chief with kindling eyes, "he could give you some great stuff." Mr. Payton, however, was difficult to open

up. His is the touch-and-go manner of speech—a "line" here and then off before the laugh comes. It is all right for an audience, but not adapted to close quarters.

He was born—"Now, don't laugh"—in Centerville, Iowa. Coming down with a sort of stage-fever, he started out with a circus, then organized a stock company and played his own neighborhood.

"See that?" Mr. Payton pointed to a framed photograph of an ingenuous-looking youth in a long coat and top-hat, reminding one slightly of a coachman. "What do you know about that? I suppose that was my idea of looking like an actor."

The company succeeded, came east about a a dozen years ago and started in Brooklyn. Presently Mr. Payton purchased a theatre there and opened with "The Girl I Left Behind Me." They played forty-one weeks that year—"Aristocracy," "East Lynne," "Jim the Penman," "The Two Orphans," "The Octoroon," "Camille," "Romeo and Juliet," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and "The Little Minister" among their varied repertory. "Look at this!" suddenly volunteered Mr.

Payton, pointing to another framed photograph, this time of a curiously antique-looking automobile. On the front seat, at the almost vertical steering-wheel, unmistakably sat Mr. Payton himself—ten years younger, more innocent-looking, with curly hair that stuck out from underneath his hat.

"Yes," he admitted, "that's how I looked then. First automobile. Ought to have seen the horses run when I came down the street! Now they'll come up and lick the gasoline off."

Times have changed, indeed. There are four Corse Payton companies now, playing in the neighborhood of New York. Every morning in the lobby of the Grand Opera House, there is a line of actors waiting, looking for a job. Mr. Payton himself used to act, but he rarely does so now except in his little monologues before the curtain. Of course, he can't be in four places at once, but he manages to look in at each of his theatres every now and then to tell the audience how things are going.

He suddenly shoots out in front of the curtain just before the last act, with a "Hello, audience!" and, swinging his arms, walks rapidly up and down the footlights, talking as he

goes. Now and then he stops, whacks his head, or, elaborately twisting one hand round with the other, slaps his wrist, and continues his promenade.

"Next week we'll revive that grand old melodrama, 'The Count of Monte Cristo.' Splendid play—brings out the full strength of the company. After that, Mrs. Elinor Glyn's 'Three Weeks.' Beautiful scenic effects—good show—don't miss it. Prices same as usual ten, twenty, and thirty cents. Dollar twenty a dozen. Ten cents admission—ten cents for 'Three Weeks.' Cheaper than room rent." The audience adore it. They wish he would go on forever. "If there's anything you'd like, let us know. List of plays out in the lobby-a hundred of 'em. Pick out the one you like best and tell us about it. That's what we're here for. Pretty soon we're going to put on a revival of the greatest melodrama ever written, 'The Two Orphans.' Prices same as usual. Ten cents admission—five cents an orphan [slap]. And if there's any play you want, just vote for it. We'll play it. We play anything from 'Hamlet' to polo. Good-by, people!"—and off he goes, swinging his arms—"I'll come back!"

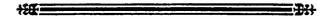
Anything from "Hamlet" to polo-with moving pictures and pink lemonade and the glad news from the curtain advertisements that somebody's gum aids digestion and that your credit is good at Spink's. Of course, the ingénue is rather too giggly, and the juvenile, in wiping out the lines of care, doth so incarnadine his face that his eyes are but two black spots, like the lumps of coal in a snow-man. The comic aunt overdoes her make-up by hanging a green parrot on the very rim of her bonnet, so that it flops up and down absurdly every time she moves her head. There are all sorts of exaggerations, overaccents, a continuous scaling down. You see the author's work through a glass darkly, perhaps. But you do see. For thirty cents (fifty in the evening) you see plays of established merit, while Broadway is paying two dollars to see plays tried out.

July, 1911.



VIII

MR. WALTER AND THE "NO QUARTER" SCHOOL



IF a man sells groceries or makes boxes all day he may reasonably ask that the playwright, who doesn't, shall, when evening comes, show the box-making, grocery-selling existence in a new light. He may demand that he throw astonishing and delightful searchlight beams not only on but clear through the boxes and tin cans, so that the outside labels are forgotten and any one can see honest work, faithfulness, fun, good citizenship, and all sorts of unexpected qualities within. The author should be able to toss them up in the air and juggle them about in amusing and unexpected ways, so that the eye is distracted, if nothing more. When, however, the box maker goes to the play and sees, as it were, only another man exactly like himself laboriously pounding the same old boxes together-when he is neither surprised nor enlightened—he naturally feels that the playwright has given him nothing.

This is the trouble with many of our plays about "graft," political bosses, district attorneys, and so on. The author has nothing to say which has not been better said in editorials and sermons. There is no reason for spending money and an evening to hear him.

There are writers, of course, like the Frenchman, Brieux, who disdain theatrical artifice and use the theatre exactly as a stump-speaker uses a cart-tail—to harangue the crowd. Such a play as "Damaged Goods" was scarcely more than a physician's pamphlet read aloud to the audience. It was not written to give people a "good time," but to break their "conspiracy of silence," force them to think and talk about a public danger of which nothing generally is said. Mr. Brieux had something important to say, and one might think that "Damaged Goods" was no more a play than an editorial in *The Breeder's Gazette* and yet that its author had done work which deserved a hearing in the theatre.

Our stage has long since ceased to be a mere grotto of limelit enchantment for taking tired people to the islands of the blest.

It is closer to life than it used to be, people turn to it more naturally, and things that are in the air can no more be kept off it—in spite of their imperfect form—than they can be kept out of the newspapers and magazines. In the case of a play-writer, on fire with indignation or protest, and frankly a pamphleteer, mere matters of stage technic, or the incidental behavior of characters apart from the argument they make, are of small concern. It is his information or advice we are interested in, and, if this is worth hearing, on other matters we can let him down rather easily. When, on the other hand, the author presents not a tract but a piece of fiction, and at the same time pretends that it is true to life; when he uses all his artifice to move us and even to make us miserable, and then says, in effect, "Don't blame me. I'm a relentless realist. Blame the facts," we are justified in holding him pretty strictly to account.

Mr. Eugene Walter is a fair target for such questioning. He is, perhaps, as good an example as we have of what might be called the "No quarter!" school, and shows his unhappy

characters—the selfish clerk in "Paid in Full," the actress in "The Easiest Way," the extravagant wife in "Fine Feathers"—no mercy whatsoever. These plays must have made many thousands miserable, for they were unusually successful, and this unhappiness was sharpened by the fact that the spectator could not dismiss the story on the stage as "play," but must needs accept it as a cross-section of actual existence lifted out warm, palpitating, etc., etc., as the critics say, from every-day life.

Now, Mr. Walter's work has many admirable qualities. It has force, a certain photographic accuracy, and its author's thoroughgoing willingness, not to say determination, to be "unpleasant," is, in itself, rare enough to be refreshing. People pricked up their ears when his rasping voice was first heard in "Paid in Full," and he took his audience up to a four-room Harlem flat, slid back the dining-room partition, and let them look in.

Now, a four-room Harlem flat, even on eighteen dollars a week, might be, in its way, the vine-clad cottage of romance hedged about by trains and trolley-cars. That would

require, to be sure, a combination of circumstances and qualities easier to imagine in the theatre than to find in real life, and Mr. Walter didn't choose to imagine them at all. There are cads in four-room flats as in Belgrave Square, and he preferred to exhibit one of these. We saw Joe Brooks at home after a hard, hot summer day, whining about not getting a "raise," jealous of other men in the office, yawping about the tyranny of his employer and the world. We saw him, in the second act, living in a semifashionable hotel on money stolen from the firm. He had lied to his young wife-rested and happy now-and told her that his salary was trebled. When exposure came, and there was no escape from arrest next morning, he demanded that she go to his employer's rooms to make what bargain she could. She went, not for any love of him, but because he declared he had lied and stolen for her sake. This employer—a hard-fisted giant of a retired sea-captain—lived in a remarkable den, with port and starboard lights and a bow light on the rear wall. It was not a pleasant place, but the young woman faced him. Her pluck and defiant purity stirred a latent chiv-

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alry in the old ruffian's heart, and he sent her home with a paper certifying that the husband's accounts had been examined and found correct.

And that precious young hyena, without considering what price she might have paid, grabbed the release and assumed that things were to go on as before. She turned to go for good then—her debt paid in full—whereupon he upbraided her with intending to return to the captain. And the last sight we had of the hero was as the outer door slammed shut and he sagged limply against the wall staring at the wreck of his life.

There was no doubt of the "relentlessness"—indeed, it was a question if the spectator's sympathy was not too sorely strained. Noble suffering, courageous sin may be viewed to some purpose, but of this perfect caddishness, long-drawn-out, one was inclined to ask the use. The "use of it"—and the sweetly brave young wife, her faithful dobbin, "Jimsey" Smith, and the horny-handed sea-dog made the piece more likable than one might suppose—was that it was chock-full of the life of thousands of shabby New York flats, not run into

a stock theatre pattern nor prettified, but as it might appear to a reporter just come downtown to his office from covering Joe Brooks's case and setting down what he had seen. And that doesn't happen in the theatre every night.

There was more relentlessness in Mr. Walter's next success, "The Easiest Way." A young actress who owes her position on the stage to a rich New York broker, whose mistress she has been, meets a young Westerner while on a summer vacation in the mountains of Colorado. Both fall in love. They are convinced that they are experiencing something deeper and more important than has ever come to them before, and, as the man has lived a variegated enough life himself not to object to the woman's past, they decide to marry.

As he is getting only thirty dollars a week as a reporter on a Denver paper, he decides to go to Goldfield for a year in the hope of making a big strike, while she is to return to New York for another year on the stage. Why the woman, assumed to be in a highly exalted frame of mind, should subject herself to the temptations involved in this course instead of marrying her reporter at once—certainly for a man

only twenty-six years old, in Colorado, thirty dollars a week is comparatively princely—is not clear except that otherwise, as is so often the case, "there wouldn't be any play."

The broker—an admirably realistic type, brutally cynical, wholly unmoral in his dealings with women, yet always a "good sport" and true to his own curious code of square dealing—warns them both. He points out that the young woman has lived too long as a spoiled butterfly; that she spends more for her cabs than the reporter earns in a week, and he finally goes east with the understanding that whenever she wishes to come back to him she may, but she must let the other man know.

She also returns, and after a few months' respectable existence, during which she can get no work and no contributions come from the miner, she gives up the struggle. Unwilling, however, to surrender her "one chance of happiness," she burns the letter the broker dictates instead of sending it to the other man. Then the miner strikes it rich and hurries east. She fights desperately to keep her sinking ship afloat, but in the end both men discover her double-dealing and cast her off.

The external naturalism of this unpleasant picture was complete, and it was again refreshing to find an author courageous enough to defy the happy ending. It was also true that no insight or imagination lifted these arbitrarily chosen surface facts into any region of beauty or universal truth—even a truth so comparatively universal as that it is hard for a lone girl on the stage to be good.

The case was a special, not a general, one. The heroine had already lost the fight once before the play began, and her second fight to be respectable was not, as the audience were asked to assume, a struggle between shame and starvation. It was between going back—open-eyed, to dangers she knew well enough—or staying away from them and marrying her young man, as a woman in her state of exaltation probably would have done had not the "relentless" author dragged her back to Broadway.

It began to appear with this play that Mr. Walter was relentless not so much in the pursuit of truth, perhaps, as toward his audience and the unhappy mortals he chose to drive

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to their melancholy ends. "Fine Feathers" strengthened this impression.

The fine feathers in this case were the pretty things a selfish young wife demanded and for which her devoted husband sold his soul and eventually wrecked his happiness and hers.

The young couple lived in a suburban bungalow near New York, for which they were paying in monthly instalments. The wife, a pretty up-State girl, did her own housework; the husband was chief chemist in a cement factory and got twenty-five dollars a week. That a healthy young woman, without children and accustomed to the simple life of a small town, would necessarily find the care of such a home an intolerable burden is not a fact, but it is true to the "relentless" view of life that it must seem so. The personal idiosyncrasies which would have had so much to do with the girl's restlessness are not brought out, and the tragedy is assumed to follow from conditions under which it was by no means inevitable.

Well, here they were, at any rate, scrimping and struggling along, with the young wife

buying a new hat instead of paying the butcher's bill and not daring to tell her husband she had been to the matinée, when along came an old friend, successful now, with a solution of their troubles. He was interested in a big dam, the architect for which had specified a certain superior quality of cement. Ordinary cement, said he, was quite good enough, and if Bob, as expert, would but let the ordinary quality go through, it would save \$200,000, \$40,000 of which would be his.

The young fellow refused, naturally. The capitalist, with a hearty frankness which disarmed less forceful men, laughed this aside as absurd. "It's merely picking up the loose ends of a business deal—and it's picking up loose ends that's made the American millionaire." And he went on to crush the young man with the argument that it isn't work that makes money—for the worker; the only thing that makes money is money, and unless you have some to turn over and make more, you will be working for some one else all your life. And the wife, by the half-open door, overheard.

The spectator did not admire her when she emerged, after the business man had gone,

whining that when she heard of all that money "she was like a child with a new Christmas tree, and you kicked it out because you don't believe in Christmas trees!" And he was surprised that a young woman with the innate fineness of feeling she was supposed to have would ever have made that bargain with the business man, under which she was to do all she could to influence her husband—"and you've no idea what a sensible woman can do with her husband"—and in return be "sort of put on the pay-roll." Mr. Walter was very relentless, indeed, with his nice girl from up-State.

The desperate, driven husband surrendered at last. "I'll get my money first and reform afterward, like the rest of 'em!" he cried, and let the contract through.

Then the net tightened. He took to drink, lost money in speculation; in the end the dam went out before a flood, and on his already tortured conscience was thrust the burden of scores of innocent lives. If he stayed, there was prison ahead, not only for him and his accomplice, but, as accessory before the fact, so the capitalist threatened, for his young

wife. So, with a sense of dramatic effect which even the relentless author did not deny him, he went to the telephone and in his wife's presence very deliberately called a policeman.

"It's a case of suicide," he said, snapped off the lights, there was a shot in the darkness, and to the pounding on the door, and the long quavering scream of the wife, the curtain slowly fell.

There, undoubtedly, was your "punch," delivered straight between the eyes, or, if you prefer, the ears. And those who enjoy the sensation doubtless enjoyed the play. The general idea—a thoughtless wife driving her husband to extravagance—was of more general application than that of "The Easiest Way," and it was again reassuring to see an author willing to carry out such a theme to the bitter end.

Of any urbane and penetrating quality, however, any distillation of human nature as distinguished from the swift journalistic treatment of certain objective facts, "Fine Feathers"—at least as played—was as innocent as the gong of a trolley-car. It seemed to have grown in the acrid air generated by the con-

stant sight and sound and feel of unattainable wealth—by the belief, because there is nothing else in sight, that things which cost money are the only things there are. The young wife was less true to common human nature than merely one more poor creature who needed a vacation from New York. And Mr. Walter, with all his force and willingness to be thorough, seemed to be writing in the light of those greenish-yellow arc-lamps which help to make night hideous on Broadway.

The trouble with many of the relentless realists is that they are not relentless enough, or that their relentlessness is too much in one direction. You may not etch in meanness and glasses of real celery and red table-cloths and slang, with a microscope and a diamond-pointed dagger, and then casually twist your unhappy characters into whatever fortuitous postures will make an effective scene. The naturalistic writer chooses a straight and narrow path, and, having chosen it, he must stick to it though the skies fall. And when that is done it still takes something more than merely being disagreeable to be true.

I remember seeing a play called "The Man

Higher Up" on the afternoon after I saw "Fine Feathers." It was the story of a ward boss, a first-class political superman, who thought the only thing worth while was power. He didn't need friends, avoided women lest any softness interfere with his strength, and he regarded graft and bribery as a mere means to an end—the end of ruling the people, because they didn't know enough to rule themselves.

This intransigent egoist was eventually brought to realize that there were other people in the world than himself—that he was a trifling episode in the main story, that there was a force, a final justice—a Man Higher Up—which must be reckoned with.

Superficially, the piece was the usual political play, with ward heelers chewing cigars, "big business," and reform, and the regulation final curtain on a noisy election night. It was a much less closely knit and workmanlike piece than "Fine Feathers," and yet I am inclined to feel that it gave more of the feeling of warmth and nourishment that one ought to get from a good book or play. The reason was that the authors were not so fixed

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on striking a knock-out blow as in sharing with their hearers a conviction about life in general. They had something they genuinely wanted to say. They were interpreters rather than reporters, and gave the audience something it might not have found for itself.



IX "BABBIE"



'Op o' Me Thumb was the Cinderella of Madame Didier's laundry in Soho—a pale, pinched little orphan. with her hair done up in a knob on the back of her head. and no good looks and nobody to care for her. That is, nobody cared for the real 'Op o' Me Thumb, but the make-believe one, the one that she told the other girls in the laundry about until they almost believed her, had a rich father, who, when the missing will was found, was going to drive up to the laundry in his great carriage and take her away with him and dress her in silks and ermine. And she had an absent lover, too, the mysterious Mr. 'Orace Greensmith, who was coming to claim her some day and who sent her wonderful dream presents of jewels and brooches and things. Mr. 'Orace had left a shirt at the laundry "to be called for," but he had never come for it, and she did it up for him fresh each week. One day when the other girls—blooming wenches, with plenty of admirers to tote them off to 'Emstead 'Eath of a bank holiday-had gone away and left her alone, who should come in but Mr. 'Orace himself, a husky young cockney with a handkerchief about his neck, poor 'Op o' Me Thumb's Prince Charming. Of course, he didn't understand. It was like trampling on her heart when he grabbed the shirt-the ineffable shirt-and crammed it into a roll. And when she told

"Babbie"

him that she had ironed it over for him every week, the best he could do was to give a great laugh and want to know if they thought they were going to make him pay for all that. One by one this big, good-humored brute tore down her golden cobwebs, trod her rainbow bubbles underfoot. When he finally went swinging out, never to return, 'Op o' Me Thumb took the crape off her arm—there was no use pretending any more that she was mourning for some one—and sank down in a heap under the ironing table alone with the wreck of her poor little heart. . . .

A QUICK-WITTED, intellectual Frenchman, viewing our theatres for the first time, might very well be bored by this piece—which strongly moved its audience when Miss Adams played it as a curtain-raiser a few years ago—and ask if this were the food on which our public fed and why Miss Adams, all very quaint and interesting to be sure, should be so important and so popular. Mr. Shaw—himself a sort of Frenchman in his clear-sighted way of looking at things—would doubtless rail at our detestable habit of veiling with sugar-coated sentiment realities so unpleasant that if we had the courage to face them we should be driven perforce to reform-

ing the social conditions of laundresses. Even some of our theatregoers would doubtless get little nourishment from the fragile pathos of "'Op o' Me Thumb," and perhaps agree with a man I met the other day—an enthusiastic performer in amateur theatricals and therefore the most virulent of dramatic criticswho dismissed Miss Adams with a wave of the hand and the phrase "acidulous vestal." Her resources are undoubtedly slight, her range limited, yet she is, perhaps, the most securely popular figure on the American stage. She can fill almost any theatre with almost any sort of play, and when a doubtful venture, like the English version of "Chantecler," is to be tried she, the last person in the world you might choose offhand for the leading rôle, is relied on to pull it through.

This is a curious state of affairs and deserves some explanation. One of the underlying reasons which we might have to explain to our visiting Frenchman—as its relevancy might not strike him at first—is the certainty of Miss Adams's audiences that whatever she presents will be "quite nice." Our custom in these matters is rather different from that in

France. A novelist there assumes that he is addressing an audience of grown-up readers. Young girls are not supposed to read anything that comes along, even stories in magazines. Mr. Howells or Mr. Tarkington, on the other hand, write not merely for doctors, lawyers, reporters, and woman suffragists, but for any schoolgirl who happens to be attracted by the title of a book as she sees it on the library table or the shelf of a circulating library. There is a similar difference in the theatre. Without arguing as to which custom is better in the long run, there is no doubt that ours helps to account for what might be called our family-party attitude toward art of all kinds. If a book or play is "good," it is generally supposed to be good for the whole family, and an actress is all the more admired and liked if her audiences feel sure that she is "just as nice as anybody, even though she is an actress."

But all sorts of stage people are just as nice as anybody—and just as stupid and uninteresting. The great thing about Miss Adams was that she made niceness exciting. She gave people more thrills, being just as nice as could be,

than were given by others when they deliberately set out to be horrid. She took them up into a thin bright ether of her own, where they were put to shame by their own earthiness. She was a skylark, instead of a siren on a rock twanging away on a pasteboard harp. Hers was no namby-pamby niceness—an actress playing down to her audience and on her good behavior like a child before strangers—but a militant niceness, a brave, pathetic little spirit, playing up for all it was worth against the brute strength of a wicked world.

You will find this quality, I think, in all of Miss Adams's plays; in "Babbie," "Peter Pan," "What Every Woman Knows" (of which it is, of course, the very essence), "Joan of Arc," "The Jesters," and even, curiously enough, in "Chantecler." And it is this one thing—I am taking for granted, of course, pleasing personality, a voice that stirs, and ordinary technic—that more than another explains what Maggie Wylie would call her "char-r-um."

This brave wistfulness, this mingling of something elf-like yet very tender and human, is so much the essence, as well, of the plays of Mr. Barrie's in which Miss Adams has appeared, that it is not easy to tell where the one leaves off, so to speak, and the other begins. The same spirit seems to breathe through player and play. The very qualities which make it rather difficult to imagine Miss Adams breaking up homes or driving multitudes to jump off Brooklyn Bridge because she had nodded to some other man, combined as they are with this high-strung, mounting spirit—this dauntless frailty—make her the one person out of thousands to impersonate Peter Pan, for instance, the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up.

He lived, you will remember, in the Never, Never, Never Land, but one day while he was sitting on the window-ledge listening to Mrs. Darling tell stories to Wendy Moira Angela, John Napoleon, and Michael Nicholas Darling, the window closed suddenly and cut off his shadow. Mrs. Darling, who was as neat as she was a pretty mother, put the shadow away in the top bureau drawer just as if it were a dress pattern, but Peter got very lonely without it, and one evening, when Mr. and Mrs. Darling had gone out to dinner and the

children were asleep, he flew through the open window and rummaged round until he found it again. The children awoke just as he was trying to stick the shadow on again by rubbing it with a cake of soap, and Wendy politely sewed it on his heel for him.

Then Peter taught them how to fly, and away they all went, out the window, back to the Never, Never, Never Land. Here they met Peter's band-the boys who had fallen out of their perambulators while their nurses weren't looking and grown up without any mothers-and Tinker Bell, who was only a light flickering over the walls, with a faraway sort of sleigh-bell jingle, but was very brave, nevertheless, and drank the poison the pirate chief left for Peter and nearly died for it; and the crocodile who had swallowed the alarm-clock-Captain James Hook, the onehanded pirate chief, whose other hand the crocodile thirsted for, always knew when he was in danger by hearing the clock's terrible approaching tick-and Smee, the pirate who wished he had a mother, and the Redskins and the Wolves and all the rest. They had many wonderful adventures, and when they finally

decided that their mother must be getting anxious and went home, Mrs. Darling wanted Peter to stay, too. Peter longed for a mother, but when he was told that he would grow up and be put in an office and probably soon be President, he had to refuse. So he made Wendy promise to come every spring to do his house-cleaning and flew back to the Never, Never, Never Land, where you're always young.

In a way, of course, Peter wasn't at all the boy who wouldn't grow up. If Peter had been just a boy, he would, no doubt, have viewed with enthusiasm the prospect of being inducted into an office and presently becoming President. It is only grown-ups who know how much one has to pay to be rich and famous; youth is sweetest when it has flown. Really, Peter was the boy who grew up and then ungrew into a boy again, losing on the way back memory and everything but his appreciation of youth, so that when the play begins he doesn't know that he ever grew up at all.

The Barrie spirit—now tenderly human, now elusive and elfin—coasts all shores, flickering from one to the other as Tinker Bell's light flickers here and there over the back

drop. Mrs. Darling takes Peter's shadow out of the bureau drawer and talks about it in the same matter-of-fact way that she would talk about John Napoleon's next suit of clothes. When the pirates are routed by Peter's band and driven over the sides of the ship into the sea, they do not fall off as even a child probably would imagine them doing in his vision of such a fight, but half roll, half lift themselves off, as though, in spite of their terrible make-up, they were children playing their parts and a bit scary of jumping off, even though a mattress is waiting safely out of sight. The spectator takes this in, quite as a matter of course, all the time tremendously excited by the straight melodrama of the fight. These are rather obvious examples of the Barrie involutions. When a sophisticated audience almost gasp in suspense because they are told that a light flickering in one corner of the stage with a faint tinkle-growing fainter every moment-has drunk poison and is about to die, and break into spontaneous and uproarious applause when its life is saved, one realizes that, as Mr. Tarkington once said, the fairies help Mr. Barrie.

"Babbie"

I have a notion that an English or American audience get more fun out of this sort of thing than a French audience—that the French are more "grown up." A friend of mine who saw "Chantecler" on one of the earlier nights in Paris told of three keen and rational young Frenchmen in plaited shirts and tight waistcoats who sat behind him, of how they listened in evident boredom until Chantecler started to telephone back to the barnyard by the morning-glory vine-to "morning-glory" home, as Rostand idiomized it. They stood it until the bee buzzed inside the flower in imitation of the telephone bell, and then gave it up and sank back with an "O là-là!" of complete dismay.

One fancies we are rather fonder of fairy-stories—certainly we delight in the hidden meaning when we know exactly where to find it. At any rate, everybody, old and young, liked "Peter Pan" and found it hard to think of anybody but Miss Adams playing it. Even her mannerisms—that odd, half-strangled utterance in moments of excitement and intensity—helped to suggest the pathos and brave wistfulness of Peter himself.

In "The Jesters" and, curiously enough, in "Chantecler" Miss Adams won—at least to the extent of maintaining the affection of her audience—apparently hopeless battles by the same means. "The Jesters," which stirred Miss Adams's ambition, no doubt because Bernhardt had played it, was a sort of Watteau fête galante—the main action of which consisted in a contest of wits between two rivals for a lady's hand, the one depending on verses and fine clothes, the other, in order to win by verses alone, disguising himself as a humpbacked jester. This was the part Miss Adams played.

When the unknown jester was asked who he might be he replied in a ballade. He won his lady's heart by a nine-stanza speech set in one of the most intricate patterns of the old French "fixed" verse. One can hear the Divine Sarah rolling out those lovely lines. Mr. Austin Dobson would doubtless have enjoyed "The Jesters," even in translation. From the ordinary American's point of view it all had about the dramatic force of a dozen Dresden china plates.

Miss Adams had not the vocal equipment to

make the lines fly and ring. Many of her quickly rippled phrases were almost unintelligible at the back of the house, and her habit of changing vowels into curious diphthong sounds—"All my luck, I claim" into "Ool my luck, I cle-e-em"—did not add to the effect. Yet here again she took the young prince up into that crystalline world of her own; and every time she threw up her head with that half-whimsical, half-defiant gesture—that passionate under-dogism, as it were, the brave, high-strung spirit seeming at once to admit the body's frailty and yet refusing to be afraid—the audience sent back its affectionate response.

The announcement that Miss Adams was to play the rooster in "Chantecler"—a part intended for the elder Coquelin and the very apotheosis, it would seem, of domineering masculinity—was greeted, naturally, with a gasp of dismay. Rostand's play had been talked about for years, ever since the afternoon the elder Coquelin departed, in answer to a mysterious telegram, for Rostand's villa in the Pyrenees. Followed whispers and hints, thrilling rumors, and delays. Rostand was ill—

bored and disgusted—and that delightfully stagy happening at the home for old actors whither Coquelin went to hear them tell of bygone triumphs and thrill them with his own skill. "To-night"—this to his valet—"I'm going to recite to you Chantecler's 'Song to the Sun' as you never heard me do it before." And the old stars and faded beauties, listening down-stairs—so the story goes—heard him thundering it out, indeed as never before, for next morning he fell dead—Chantecler's last crow.

Guitry in the part then; more quarrels, jealousy—clairvoyants consulted to see how the play would turn out. Some said it would succeed, some could hear the dreadful silence of the bored audience; one genial lady prophesied that the theatre would tumble down. Rostand himself—that sprightly combination of æsthete and man of the world, poet and faker—was said to have said: "And if it should fail now—what a delicious sensation!" Mr. Rostand got his sensation, or very near it. The piece lost in the playing. The actors, masked and hampered by their feathers and beaks and claws—only the principals showed

their faces, and gesturing was of course impossible—were neither one thing nor the other. Comparatively few of their lines "got across" as they should, and much of the play's poetry and dramatic quality was untranslatable into the visual terms required by the stage.

Such the ordeal—needless to say it probably didn't appear so to our ambitious little Babbie—which confronted Miss Adams: to play a part for which she seemed utterly unfitted, in a translated play which was scarcely a success in the author's original words.

The result was interesting and characteristic. Miss Adams has the intelligence and artistic instinct to make her impersonation, whatever it is, pleasing and consistent with itself. Moreover, there is much of Chantecler's tragedy—the tragedy of the cock who thought he crowed the sun up and gave the world its light each morning, only to find that he was only a part of the great scheme and that the sun came up quite well without him—there is much of the pathos of this which falls, or may readily be twisted, into that vein in which Miss Adams is most appealing.

The brave spirit, soaring and unafraid in

spite of physical frailty; that dauntless weakness, lifted and suffused with poetic fire; the same note struck and sustained—with slender hands clinched and half-strangled utterancein "L'Aiglon," "The Jesters," and in "Peter Pan," could be used here. What could be done she did, but not for a moment was there any illusion of masculinity or of the particular. thing which Rostand intended to be Chantecler. In short, Miss Adams scored with exactly the same means she had used heretofore—the key was set at the start when, instead of an excited manager rushing out to stop the raising of the curtain in order to recite the ingenious prologue which prepares the audience for what is to come, Miss Adams herself, in a simple white dress with all her char-r-um turned on full force, prettily recited the lines. It was set again a moment later when Chantecler himself (almost the smallest figure there) strutted into the barnyard and delivered his first apostrophe to the sun. The make-up was perfect, the little strut cleverly assumed, and the "I adore you," etc., exquisitely read, but its low, sweet, tremulous eloquence was altogether feminine-the eloquence, perhaps, of

"Babbie"

one who knew she was loved, not honest old Chantecler addressing the deity he was proud to command. No admiration for Miss Adams's gifts or approval of her artistic ambition or interest in this novel, beautiful, and entertaining play could blind one to the fact that she was quite impossible in the part, or, rather, that the real Chantecler was impossible for her. Char-r-um is a wonderful thing, but a man's a man for a' that. And so is a rooster.

The same weapons with which Miss Adams won a doubtful victory, or at any rate defended herself, in these French plays were used in "What Every Woman Knows." What every woman or at least what every successful wife knows, according to Mr. Barrie, is that although apparently her husband does his own part of the world's work himself, it is she who, by believing in and encouraging him, by filling in the gaps, fits him to do it. A raw Scotch youth, with unbounded force, ambition, and self-confidence, succeeding brilliantly in Parliament because his wonderful little wife suggested the best part of the speeches to him, while she sat by apparently only interested in knitting stockings, and smoothed out a thou-

sand difficulties with her tact and cleverness, is the shape in which Mr. Barrie chooses to embody a general truth.

Here, as elsewhere, his characters are not people so much as they are human qualities, covered with ordinary clothes. The things they do may be fantastic, but the things they think and feel are real and true. He does not say: "Now this objective picture called Mrs. Shand, consisting of one female face, one dress etc., etc., would never send this other objective picture called Mr. Shand and consisting of one top-hat, one frock coat, two polished shoes, etc., etc., to a country house-party with another woman." What he does say is something like this: "Love, imagination, charm, can generally get the better, in the end, of stupid sensuousness. A clever, witty, delightful little woman like Mrs. Shand, who realizes how indispensable she is to her self-absorbed husband's career, knows that she has nothing serious to fear from a merely handsome, stupid charmer who has fascinated the poor fellow for the moment because in his hardworking, commonplace life he has never met such a person before." Give him a little rope

"Babbie"

and he will cure himself—the house-party is merely the casual shape in which this general truth is embodied.

If the intensive art of Mr. Barrie does not always hit one like a pile-driver, it exerts, nevertheless, an astonishing power. I was impressed with this on seeing "What Every Woman Knows" for the second time at a Wednesday matinée, when a crowded house and the guile of a ticket speculator combined to put me in the last row in the balcony, in J-19. The special peculiarity of seat J-19 at the Empire Theatre was that it had literally no floor underneath it, but was mysteriously attached after the manner of a bracket. Balanced thus, legs dangling, head almost touching the roof, and enveloped and half asphyxiated in a matinée atmosphere of steam-heat, caramels, violets, and perfumed clothes, a mere man was helpless, peculiarly unable to interpose any resistance to the collective emotion of the female mob. As the play went on and Mrs. Shand's cleverness, pluck, and self-renunciation were contrasted more and more with the selfishness of her husband, a tense and increasing sympathy and excite-

ment were exhaled from the audience. Spasmodic little bursts of applause came at unexpected moments—moments where the pathetic heroism of the little wife's existence seemed to receive, at least, tacit recognition. When at last Mrs. Shand appeared at the countess's country house just as her husband was beginning to be disillusioned about Lady Sybil, to find that his hand had lost its cunning and that somehow he could not write a speech as he used to do, and Mr. Venables, the party whip, was beginning to think that his young protégé was a false alarm, it was almost as if Sheridan had galloped in on a real horse and ordered the ranks to reform and charge.

Maggie Shand had brought a second draft of her husband's speech with her, and she intended that they should go over it together and that he should be made to believe as usual that it was all his. The good-humored countess, however, slyly takes the speech from the bag and sends it to Mr. Venables, who is working in the garden. When the humorless Shand discovers this apparently ghastly blunder—that his wife's corrections should go to Mr. Venables as his own—and Maggie, knowing well

what is going to happen and fighting desperately to keep intact her husband's belief in himself, cries: "I am so ashamed, John—Oh, I am so ashamed!" a breeze of whispers leaped across the house.

Then Mr. Venables was discovered approaching. "Now," cries the countess, "now we shall see just what part you did have in this!" And before Mr. Venables reached the stage, before he had said how good the speech was and started to read some of its irresistible "Shandisms," before, in short, the moment had at all arrived, the whole balcony began to applaud. It was as if beneath the droll comedy on the stage a sort of battle of sex was being played, as if each woman there saw in Maggie Shand's self-denial her own life and the other lives of that sex whose greatest work is unheralded, which realizes itself most completely often through the completest renunciation. Overpowered by the collective emotion, dangling helplessly near the roof in J-19, one seemed to hear bugles and battle-cries under those quick whispers and the patter of gloves.

An actress who can bring about such results, however slight her resources or however much

she may owe to the author, must have played an important part not only in the story of the theatre, but in the feelings, opinions, and possibly subsequent actions of hundreds of thousands of people. If the thrills of all those poignant moments-Babbie's elf-like girlishness, Peter Pan's cry about the fairies, such instants as this in "What Every Woman Knows"-could all be gathered together as little streams make a river, how wonderful might appear this mere thing, "char-r-um." We saw it in an unexpected light, indeed, in the June after "What Every Woman Knows" was played, when with trumpets and armor and clashing swords and all the king's horses and men, Miss Adams played "Joan of Arc" one night, out-of-doors, in the quiet stadium at Cambridge. It had been a dream of hers for years, and for our wistful little Babbie to march thus at the head of her stage legions, banners flying, into the heart of our oldest seat of learning must have been-even more, perhaps, than the colossal joke of playing "Chantecler"—one of the adventures of a lifetime.

I cannot speak of the performance, as I but viewed it through gossip and the papers from

afar, but it was, at any rate, both unusual and impressive. Nature herself, often less gracious than sentimental theatre audiences, appeared to smile on the quaint endeavor. A new moon hung over the stadium and the woods of Domremy, and not a breath of wind ventured to stir against the players' voices. "A vast concourse of Bostonians and human beings," as one newspaper purist described the audience, filled the amphitheatre and so quiet did they sit that Miss Adams's vibrant treble carried to all but the topmost seats.

It was interesting to see the resources of so powerful a theatrical general as Mr. Charles Frohman absolutely at the command of one frail little woman—our plaintive, plucky Babbie; the astonishing power, measured in the earthiest terms of cash, special trains, "supers," and so on, wielded by such an illusive, ethereal thing as an actress's charm. One hundred horses, specially trained to the peculiarity of clanking armor, were sent from New York and more gathered in from Boston. Miss Adams had but to say, when the preliminaries were being discussed, "And one thousand men"—and there were one thousand men, and

more. When, on the eve of the first night, one of the court personages seemed lacking in personal attendants, and the stage-director explained that no ladies in waiting had been provided, Miss Adams had but to say, "Get them!" and straightway they were there, twelve of them, properly costumed and rehearsed. An actress whom children cry for and simple young ladies adore can move mountains and make red-faced men with thick necks get down on their knees. There is steel beneath the velvet.



X

ON THE BOWERY AGAIN



IN the manager's office at Miner's Bowery Theatre a circular cardboard chart hangs on the wall. It consists of two disks, set one on top of the other and marked like clock faces, the inner with the names of cities, the outer with the names of burlesque companies playing there.

After the show is over on Saturday night and the ushers are sweeping up the cigar butts and peanut shells and the musicians have gone round the corner for their beers, you can imagine Mr. Tom Miner stepping over to this indicator and giving the outer disk a turn. "The Ginger Girls," who were at Newark, are now in Paterson; "The Harem Favorites" have moved from Utica to Buffalo. And what is indicated there is actually happening over several thousand miles of "road." As the cardboard wheel turns you can imagine, in the dark theatre alleys of thirty or forty cities, as many trucks jolting away to the station

with their loads of scenery, as many Irish and Hebrew comedians and deep-voiced leading ladies and little soubrettes with yellow curls and an army of sturdy chorus nymphs, scrubbing off their make-up, packing their battered trunks, and preparing to hit the trail.

Their posters—green-whiskered Irishmen and hour-glass Amazons in tights—occasion-ally drift across the eye from some back street bill-board as the "L" train rumbles by. No first-night reviewers acclaim them; their coming is hidden away in a microscopic line of type; for the polite theatre world they do not so much as exist. Yet somewhere, every afternoon and evening, be it May or December, they are playing; and if they were to get together and march down Fifth Avenue behind their bands, the street might be filled all the way from Forty-second Street to Washington Square.

Like the spokes of a wheel whose rim touches Baltimore and Toronto, Boston and Omaha, these strange little bands of slap-stick troubadours, all fashioned on much the same pattern, follow each other round and round. The sureness of the thing, compared with ordinary

stage vicissitudes, is beyond all belief. Two shows a day, forty weeks in the year—only a factory or the most dazzling star knows such stability as this.

A leading man in the average serious play marches up to his first night about as he might march up to a row of belching cannon. If the audience doesn't damn him the critics will, or if both are kind and he wins a "personal success" there are many chances to one that the play will fail and fade away after a limping fortnight. But when the Hebrew comedian with the "Oriental Rosebuds" sticks a black patch over two of his front teeth and pulls his flat derby hat down over his ears on the 1st of September, he knows as surely as he can know anything that on January 27 his address will be, for instance, the "Star and Garter," Chicago, and that in the last week in May he will be playing at the Empire in Hoboken, ere retiring to his summer place in Asbury Park.

Real burlesque, like that which used to be seen at Weber and Fields, may be satire of a very "legitimate" and witty sort. Miss Fay Templeton's delicious parody of "Bunty," in

which she duplicated almost perfectly the prim little Scotch girl's mannerisms and accent, yet by certain exaggerations here and there contrived to make the whole ridiculous, was burlesque at its best. So was that classic scene in which Fields cried, "Gott! How I lof you!" while he jabbed an affectionate forefinger into poor little Weber's blinking eyes.

The "burlesque" of the popular-price circuits is quite another thing-merely a roughhouse musical show without satirical intent yet it has its rules, like anything else, and is designed just as surely to please its special audience as the Gaiety girl or a Drury Lane melodrama. Of late years there has been here and there an endeavor to cut out the "rough stuff," so successful that burlesque now often means merely a cheap edition of Broadway musical comedy, a trifle brassier and more mechanical, perhaps, than the original. The original article-the old-fashioned slap-stick burlesque of the "T'row Him Down Mc-Clusky!" school, the sort with which Harvard freshmen used to refresh their overcivilized souls on a Saturday evening at the Old Howard, which still survives here and there in

spite of the cruel spread of refinement—this had a flavor all its own.

The chorus carried spears in those days and were built like grenadiers. Amazons they were truly called, for there was that in their size and noble contour and indifference to whatever was said that seemed to put them above the insect race of men absurdly plotting their discomfiture and undoing. Particularly was this true of the leading woman-slightly smiling, indifferent alike to associates and audience, confident that the mere sight of her was something no words could adorn, she seemed to have come from a world of her own and but to have lent herself to the festivities of the evening. Men, behind the footlights or in front of them, were but "boys" to her, amusing in their harmless antics; and when the green-whiskered Irishman, with a killing wink at the audience, marched behind her as she walked, holding his hands apart to indicate her breadth of beam, 'twas not the impudence that impressed so much as the majesty with which she swam above it, serene as a Broadway policeman.

Mrs. Gotrox, or some name similarly sug-

gestive of "Fifth Avenue" and "Society," she was called in the play—Miss Lillian Russell, in the old Weber and Fields days, was but a finer flowering of the type—her daughter the lively soubrette. Then there were the two slap-stick comedians trying to break into society and always fighting and knocking each other down; the comic Hebrew, forever embarrassed by the difficulty of keeping his money and spending it like a "sport"; the effeminate young man, vastly relished by the riotously contemptuous audience; and then the lesser figures, including the four harassed young men who appeared in breathless succession as waiters, policemen, Bowery toughs, and so on, and "doubled" in front of the back drop at last, while the final scene was being set, as a sailor's male quartet.

None of your Bond Street tea-rooms here, titled youths in top-hats and gardenias, languishing milliners' apprentices, exquisite as orchids whatever their morals might be. The slap-stick comedians, in baggy trousers and undershirts, came down to the footlights—

"Say! I-was-walkin'-down-the-street-the-other-day-an'-I-saw-a-dog---"

"What! You-said-I-was-a-dog--" Slap!---and so on.

The Irish comedian was considered delightfully droll when he spat in his waistcoat pocket or sprayed the German comedian from an enormous bulb of insect-powder; and when the economical Hebrew was obliged to "open wine" to entertain the society leader, one must expect the unfortunate man to clean his finger nails, and possibly his ears, with the table-knife; and when Mrs. Gotrox's dashing friend, Mr. Wallingford Skinem, exasperated at his lack of sporting spirit, emptied the salad bowl over his head, thriftily to scrape the salad off and cram it in his mouth-robust humor, as the critics say, but, then, so was the taste of the audience; and when the comedian declared that he wouldn't marry a girl until he had seen her in a bathing suit-"you wouldn't buy a watch unless you could see the works"—the crowd promptly responded, appearing to agree, young women no less than their beaming escorts, on the sanity of the observation as well as its wit.

The slap-stick has long since been considered uninspired; gone are the hour-glass Ama-

zons and their spears; yet blank cartridges, steps that collapse and shoot the comedian to the bottom, siphons and pails of paste or soapsuds are still important parts of the plot, and, though the ballad-singer may fairly swoon away in sentiment, the comedian must quickly follow and knock somebody down, or fire off a few blank cartridges, or pour the soup on somebody's head.

The young ladies' seminary is almost as necessary to old-fashioned burlesque as a bed used to be to Mr. Belasco. It makes little difference whether the scene is Coney Island or the Metropolitan Tower, "Kitty's Friends from the Seminary" can always be there. They may come in red satin tights or bathing suits or green dress suits with green top-hats, but they are Kitty's Friends from the Seminary just the same.

It is to the seminary that the Hebrew comedian—whose daughter Kitty is studying there—and the German comedian—disguised as a baron looking for an American heiress come just as the young ladies, in pink tights and white sweaters, are about to take their exercise. Kitty explains that they are "all

ready for gym," and Mr. Coblinsky remarks that, by golly, he should say they were ready for Jim; and just then Mr. Wallingford Skinem arrives and induces both gentlemen to take out life insurance.

As they start to shoot themselves so that they can get the money right away, it appears that night has fallen and that it is time to rob the seminary. A ladder is raised to the garden wall and Mr. Coblinsky chosen to climb it, while Skinem keeps a watch below. Half-way up he falls between the rungs, of course, and the audience nearly dies laughing as he tries to lift himself out by the seat of his trousers while the orchestra man turns a ratchet or clanks a cow-bell.

Meanwhile, the seminary catches fire and Kitty's friends, in pajamas now, jump one by one into a life-net, and then, while the sailors' male quartet gives an imitation of a calliope, the scene shifts to show Kitty's friends sound asleep in their dormitory (evidently not touched by the fire), while the would-be burglars enter from a skylight disguised as paper-hangers. Ensues a comic paper-hanging scene, in which the Baron becomes tangled in the

wall-paper and finally receives most of the pail of paste in his face, licking off what he can with great relish. Mr. Coblinsky says that he is a stenographer in a livery-stable and stenogs the hay up to the horses, and dashing Mr. Skinem asks the Principal if she has any children. She says that she has two nice little boys, thank you, and he says not to thank him. And then Kitty's friends come in again and sing "String a ring of roses round your Ro-o-o-sie" and "When that midnight choo-choo leaves for Alabam," and by now it's summer and time for Kitty's friends to change into ball gowns and appear at supper on the Waldorf-Astoria roof.

It was a sign on a Ninth Avenue ash can,

BILLY WATSON AND HIS BEEF TRUST BEAUTIES

which lured me recently to the outskirts of farthest Brooklyn for a somewhat closer study of burlesque. It was one of those rainy winter days when the sponge-like sky, not content to squeeze itself over the town, seems to sag into the very streets and the world is so muffled

and opaque that one is almost surprised to find its ordinary wheels still turning.

Under the river and out again, through interminable streets, alike in dismalness and more dismal still under the cold winter rain, and then, when it seemed as if one must have taken the wrong car, there was a big, warm, crowded theatre, full of band music and smoke and the smell of chocolate and spearmint, and men, women, and children roaring at "Krausmeyer's Alley."

Where they came from, how they could leave their homes or work—they and the thousands like them crowding similar houses in Eighth Avenue, the Bronx, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, goodness knows where, every afternoon in the week—that is one of the mysteries. Here they were, at any rate, and there on the stage was Mr. Billy Watson—baggy comedian's clothes, toothpick in his mouth, red nose, cuffs tied with ribbons, hatchet in his pocket—a sort of mixed-ale Cyrano striding, impudent and serene, through this slapstick epic of the "Irish an' the Dutch."

Mr. Watson, as one might gather from the name bestowed on his assistants—its enchant-

ing connotation flashed across his mind at the time of the beef-trust investigation and he has used it ever since-belongs to the classic or Bæotian school of burlesque, uncontaminated, or nearly so, by the soft Ionian refinements of musical comedy. "Krausmeyer's Alley" goes back to the days when there were shanties and goats in New York where apartment-houses stand now. Krausmeyer's shanty and Grogan's are perched on adjoining rocks with a clothes-line between, or, in more spirited moments, a shower of cats. You will have seen this shower of cats on some back-street billboard, perhaps, and thought it but a fanciful decoration, a flower of the same order of lithography as that from which sprung the comic valentine, but Krausmeyer and Grogan actually throw them in the play and have been throwing them these eighteen or twenty years.

The action throughout is set in this simple Elizabethan key. The slap-stick has gone out even among such classicists as Mr. Watson, but a hatchet takes its place, and he would be as lost without it as a Drury Lane villain without his gold cigarette case. How roguish its appearance as he asks, "Has anybody here seen

Grogan?" and as he embraces the leading lady, how wittily—unseen by her—he taps her on the back with it while the bass drum goes "Pom!" or the orchestra makes a sound like rapping a hollow cocoanut.

When Krausmeyer enters Grogan thinks he "smells a mushrat," and Grogan, planting his feet on the table, is requested to take them off and "give the limburger a chance." We are scarcely introduced to the alley before there is a general fight. And the first act ends—after the Beef Trust Beauties, appropriately dressed in red silk tights, red claw-hammer coats, and red top-hats to represent "Fifth Avenue swells," have danced and sung—in a "fight, battle scene, and riot."

We go to Ireland in the next act, where a medley of Irish songs are sung by the company's handsome soloist and the Beef Trust Beauties appear as "French girls invited from the Parisienne," and then Grogan and Krausmeyer fight again. Then the scene shifts to New York and the christening of little Philip Krausmeyer, with the Beef Trust Beauties metamorphosed into "grown-up kids from the alley." There is vivid repartee about little

Philip's resemblance to Grogan, ending with what the programme describes as a "fight to a finish," and down goes the curtain on "Auld Lang Syne." Spirited, slap-bang stuff, it will be observed, fit for a generation which sang "Throw him down, McClusky!" from the heart and knew naught of tea dances or cabarets.

The somewhat staggering effect produced by the sight of that crowded theatre, in a region and on an afternoon when you would scarce expect to find any one abroad, was increased when I endeavored to engage Mr. Watson on the more intimate and personal phases of his art.

To see him on the stage, strings on his cuffs, carrot in his buttonhole, hatchet in his pocket, the picture of impudent good humor, you might expect to be received with a wink and an "I got you, Steve!" and be promptly rioted away on a gale of breezy anecdote. A slapstick troubadour for thirty years, the captain of the Beef Trust Beauties—there must be a laugh in every line! Alas for stage illusion! The Krausmeyer I found in the star's dressingroom, climbing into business clothes—stiff

white shirt, banker's cutaway, opulent diamond ring-could scarcely have been less interested in the merely spiritual aspects of his trade if he had been a hotel keeper or a popular novelist.

The wind, it appeared, blowing through the slightly open window that afternoon, had started an ache in his side. The manager, deeply concerned, thought of massage, a Turkish bath. One of the more elephantine of the beef-trusters, knocking timidly at the great man's door, suggested capsicum vaseline. In the pauses of this colloquy I spoke of the common ignorance of the extent and importance of burlesque and the desire of the public to know more of one who stood so evidently in the forerank and front of it. Mr. Watson nodded and thought that possibly capsicum vaseline might be the thing, after all. It was then a question of who should rub it in and when and where the operation should take place.

"Now you, Mr. Watson," I resumed with a jovial air, after listening some time to this discussion, "occupy, to your branch of the profession, the same position that John Drew

does to his-

Mr. Watson readily assented and turning to his manager wanted to know what on earth had become of those keys. This subject was considered at length and from various angles, the hopeful representative of the uninformed public biding his time as best he might—the final conclusion being that "the boy had lost them." So far so good—a new boy to-morrow, evidently.

The mention of Al Reeves occurred to me as a possible means of luring Mr. Watson's attention. Mr. Reeves, it should be explained, is another king of burlesque, almost, if not quite, as famous as Mr. Watson. One catches glimpses of him, now and then, bowling down Broadway in his pale-green limousine, his name on a brass plate on each door—an ornate chariot, somewhat between a pagoda and one of the glass-sided automobiles used by the more expensive florists—and in the back seat Mr. Reeves, himself a ruddy orchid, smoking a fat cigar.

Mr. Reeves plays himself on the stage, and his characteristic device is that of talking across the footlights about his company to the audience. No Oriental potentate in his seraglio

wields a higher hand than he, and subcomedians and patient nymphs must "stand" for anything that will get a laugh. "Don't applaud that man so much," he will interrupt, "or he'll want a raise. I'm paying him union wages already-nineteen dollars a week!" Or, "Now give Miss Crawford over there a chance. She's a good, clever girl and worth all I pay her." And when the hapless young woman has sung her song, he will solemnly apologize: "She usually does better than that. She'll have to take her clothes out of my trunk if she don't improve." I have seen Mr. Reeves grab one of his singers by the throat and give a lifelike imitation of choking her until she gurgled, "Hey, let up! I've got a sore throat," while a subcomedian, looking on with every appearance of surprised concern, informed the delighted audience in an aside that "There's a lot of things on the stage you think are only acting and they're real, after all."

"Al Reeves," I began-

Mr. Watson dismissed his rival with a wave of the hand. "That rough stuff'll go with a stag crowd but not with a general audience. He's no comedian. I am—that's the difference.

I've got a lot of imitators, but they're only so in name—not in comedy. Just built the Orpheum in Paterson—cost me a hundred and thirty thousand dollars. I clean up about thirty thousand a year out of this show. That ain't so bad for a bum German comedian!" Mr. Watson grinned and, with an air of one to whom advertising is no object—indeed, why should it be if, without it, your audience appears twice a day as certain as the sun—pushed toward the box-office.

Here, from his examination of the record of receipts, he was recalled to the fact that the insatiable hound of the hungry public still hung to the trail.

"Look here," said Mr. Watson. "Get 'Varities' for January. They give me a two-column 'reader'—that'll give you all you want. Or—here, wait a minute." He took out his fountain pen and scribbled on a sheet of the house letter-paper the following telegraphic summary of his life:

Thirtieth year in burlesque went in the show works in Chatham Square Museum at \$6 per week and today is to Burlesque what Drew is to the \$2 houses. No Salary could be figured on for the Original in the Burlesque

Circuit. Inherits his comedy from his mother who causes just as much Laughter at the meals Home that Billy causes in the back of the footlights. Going to Europe this Summer for really his first Vacation abroad while over will look up Foreign Ideas. Krausmeyer's Alley is to Burlesque what Uncle Tom is to the Children or The Old Homestead was to the Public. Mr. W. is a Young Man of 47 and has made perhaps near ½ Million Dollars in the popular Price Houses.

"There," said Mr. Watson, "dope it out any way you like. I got to go an' eat." The glowering brow of the capsicum lady, waiting near by for her chief, made further parley inopportune, and there was only time to venture a word as to whether in selecting the Beef Trust Beauties any weight limit or other minimum qualification was observed. "He hires' em by the pound—on the hoof," a rival press-agent had airily explained.

"They all weigh about a hundred and ninety," said Mr. Watson, and, raising an umbrella over his fair companion, disappeared in the rain.

Shows like "Krausmeyer's Alley" will doubtless soon be no more. Pale wraiths of musical comedy are continually crossing these once-scornful frontiers and moving pictures

flicker where once the slap-stick rang. The Bowery is not what it used to be when it was full of shooting-galleries and sailors and strong-arm men and poor girls drank carbolic on the dance-floor at McGuirk's; nor is burlesque what it was when, on a summer evening, you could hear the chorus at Tony Pastor's through the open windows of Tammany Hall; when Annie Yeamans was singing "Maggie Murphy's Home," and Lillian Russell was a girl.

Yet these post-Elizabethans die hard, as some of the foregoing remarks may have suggested, and a blind-folded ancient might still be taken to Miner's Bowery of a winter night and fancy he smelled the smoke and heard the band and songs of thirty years ago. The original theatre was built in '78, and the first Miner became a great man out of it and wore a top-hat and went to Congress, and his sons continue the traditions of their sire.

Here you will find that friendly, paternal relation between manager and public which has disappeared from the cold business houses up-town. The audience itself takes part in the fun, and the head of the theatre shows

himself on the stage, monarch of all he surveys, half Santa Claus, half Solomon.

On waltz-contest night, when any young man may step up on the stage, pick his nymph from the chorus and waltz her around to music played for them alone, it is the manager who sits in judgment, weighs with impartial ear the wild applause and decides whether the diamond ring shall go to the tall youth whose elegance in holding his partner with thumb and forefinger just touching her back, other fingers extended—as if she were a teacup—has aroused universal admiration, or to the Adams Express boy who waltzes well, but appears a trifle too confident, to presume a bit on the popularity of his blue coat and brass buttons.

He decides the wrestling-bouts—here again is a chance for any one in the audience—and the cabaret contest, a modern diversion conducted by dashing young scouts sent down by the music publishers to sing their new songs. On "Country Store Night" he calls out the prize-winners—"for Mrs. Flossie Spielberg, I wash-boiler, I dozen photographs at the Manhattan studio, 2 cans chloride of lime and a

lace waist; for Mrs. O. W. Elfenbein, \$5 worth of dental work, a mattress, 6 cans of Fairy salmon, and a live goat." There is something of the old-time flavor about Country Store Night—everything must be carried away by the prize-winners themselves—they have even had a horse on the stage, which the new owner had to lead out the side aisle to the cheers of the audience.

You may complain with the more knowing —who, dismal souls, can accept nothing at its face value—that the impossibility of keeping up a supply of genuine amateurs has taken the edge off Amateur Night, but you will have no lack of excitement if you are one of the victims themselves. It isn't so easy to face the Amateur Night audience-even if you are a professional amateur and come from an agency and have a circuit of Amateur Nights -a dollar apiece and car-fare-and sing at third-rate cabarets and moving-picture shows between times. The burlesque audience is quick and critical, and they've already seen one show before you come on. They have looked on for three hours, clapped and sung and whistled and smoked themselves blue in

the face, and now it's eleven o'clock and their turn.

You can see them out in front, grinning through the smoke, ready to howl if they don't like your looks or your first note is "blue" or your stuff is old or slow—"think of a guy tryin' to put over a monologue at this time o' night!" Of course, they're supposed to give you a run for your money, and Mr. Tom Miner himself, bored as a prize-fight referee or the Monte Carlo croupier of story, sits just outside the prompt-entrance with his eagle eye on the house and his own hungry stage-hands.

But the man with the hook—a huge sort of landing-net without the net—is champing the bit in the wings across the way; the stage-hands, with blank-cartridge revolvers, are peering through the back drop, and they have a reputation to support. There is one in Brooklyn known for his black-and-blue spots all over the five boroughs, and one on the Bowery whose pride it is that no amateur breathes he cannot put off. Sometimes they let a man down from the flies, to disappear with the hapless performer like the condor of the An-

des, and sometimes a practical trap-door is painted on the back drop and the victim shot through it to the mattress behind.

They have given this up at Miner's as unnecessarily painful to the artist's feelings, and the hook, which used to be a sort of shepherd's crook, was modified to a hoop after they caught a negro just under the ears one night and choked him gray before they could saw it off. They are very gentle at Miner's, so all agree; and the crowd will give you a chance of a sort; but it's something like the chance in a street fight—you must knock'em down first.

And it was pretty to see Number 1 do it a pale youth, blasé, true child of the pavement, who strolled out to the footlights and turned on one of those bullet-proof, sweet, nasal tenors with a lyric tremor that went straight to the crowd's heart:

"Like the roses need their fragrance
Like the sweetheart needs a kiss——"

Calm, hands limp at his sides, he sent the whining, skylark note soaring above the smoke as the man with the bit of tin between

his teeth sends his whistle above the roar of the street:

"Like a broken heart needs gladness,
Like the flowers need the dew,
Like a ba-a-a-by needs . . . its mother,
THAT'S . . . how I need you!"

The house, barking for slaughter a moment before, was still as a mouse. He sang all there was to sing and came back for an encore before they would let him go.

The next, a clog-dancer, had scarcely started his shuffle, with a fatal glance of indecision at his jury, before there came a universal "WOW!" and off he went on the hook—likewise two velvet-eyed Italian guitar players who fled at the first hoot like startled fawns.

Number 4, a sturdy, sawed-off little girl, Italian or Slav, it was hard to tell which, like thousands who go pouring down into the East Side when the loft buildings close, stood watching all this. She was a veritable amateur, very different from the "flip" young girls from the cabarets, and had a curious old duenna with her. There was a jeer as she

waddled on—looking as if she had been put in a vice and flattened by having a weight pushed down on her head—and it broke into a roar when she hit her first note flat. From the wings we could see her mouth moving and the leader waving his violin and trying to follow, but the crowd drowned out her voice. No blushes or gaspings from this little flat-headed girl, however. She faced them as so many of her sisters face life, unhopeful, unsurprised, sullen, and unafraid. At last something like annoyance crossed her face and she started off.

"They ain't going to pull no hook on me!" she muttered.

"Go on back, kid!" whispered the stage-

manager. "They'll treat you right."

"I won't have no hook pulled on me," she repeated, trying to push through, but he urged her on again, and Tom Miner himself rose and put out his hand. "You give this little girl a chance," he shouted. "Yes, I mean you up there in the box. Another word and out you go. Give her a chance—she can sing all right."

The house quieted and she started again, but hit it worse this time than before. She

gave it up then, still defiant. "He's playing too low," she snapped. "Nobody could sing to that!"

You might have thought nothing could hold that howling mob; and then a boy with a violin stepped out and showed how. He was a scrubby little Hebrew, about seventeen, with no collar, and the sweat dripping off the end of his nose as he played, a self-absorbed, painstaking little man who played just as the other youth had sung and could tuck his instrument under his shabby chin and slowly, surely, with the same tremulous resonance and sirupy slurs, make it soar and sing. They called him back and threw dimes and nickels on the stage, and he picked them up carefully and walked off, as he played, without a smile. He had a job in a hotel orchestra but didn't intend to stick there, he told me, as he wiped his streaming forehead on his sleeve.

There was a bookish-looking young man, older than the rest, who tried to sing, but retired before a bombardment of blank cartridges—still grave and serene. He was a suburban chicken farmer with a zeal to shine in other spheres which brought him here when-

ever they would let him go on. Two or three pert young girls with enamelled faces and impudent manners screeched successfully their ragtime songs and, as we listened, crowded there in the first entrance, a shabby, long-haired youth, who might have been an unsuccessful inventor, took a battered paper from his inside pocket and tapped it mysteriously. He was going to do a monologue, but this—this gem unrevealed—was an eight-part sketch.

"I play them all myself," he whispered. "Go on a young man—off—turn round—come back an old man. See? Eight parts—and I play 'em all. They give me a try-out next week, and if it gets over they'll put me on big time—hey?" He managed just about to open his mouth before he was hustled off—as was a bashful young Italian who tried a monologue, wrapped up, Hamlet-like, in the overcoat he had worn in from the street. Then a tall girl sang—so well that the stage-manager promptly offered her a job with the regular show.

"Don't say anything," she whispered with an odd smile. "I've been out with four of 'em

already." It was the dollar she needed—or the smell of the stage again.

Back in the dusk, where the idle scenery was piled, alone but for the lean stage cat, sat an amateur of another sort. No crowding into the first entrance for her along with those fresh young snipes from the cabarets. She knew her place and stayed there—in her poke bonnet, comic white stockings, and freakish dress stuck over with playing-cards. An old-timer she, fifty, perhaps—it's merely a matter of light—"professional" through and through, with one of those well-made, rather piquant faces which the years pass over untouched. A little rouge, a few blond curls, a kindly upglance from the footlights—it's almost good as new.

Hers was a "suffragette act" in which she made a humorous argument for the cause. "It goes pretty well in the cabarets and the ladies crowd round sometimes and talk to me." It wasn't hard to guess about how much chance they would give it here! But you get your dollar and car-fare, there'll be another Amateur Night in Brooklyn next Wednesday and a chance at cabarets between times, not to men-

tion music lessons, and there are hall bedrooms with board, at five or six dollars a week. She should worry, indeed, as they say, even though she was an old-timer and had played at the head of her own show.

The audience howled at the mere sight of her; and for a time she fought back with every trick she knew, and such shrieks and creaky coquetries and comic hand wavings and kicks and tippings of her bonnet here and there as none of those who had gone before her could learn in a dozen years. No use; they wouldn't stand it, although in the glare of the footlights she looked almost young, and so after a little she bowed herself with a final comic rearward kick and hurried in business-like fashion to the dressing-room.

She was a delightful old lady, glad to be talked to, ready to listen and laugh and to put her hand on your arm and tell the story of her life ten minutes after you met her. She had played in burlesque and light opera with all the well-known people of a generation ago—or in the kindly haze of memory it seemed that she had—and had three or four husbands more or less. There was the minstrel she ran away

with at sixteen—"and my mother came after me and brought me back and put me in the school again"—and the bass in light opera, and the manager who fell into a fortune and began such a wild career that she was glad enough to get away from him. "I'm living in a hall bedroom now, over in West Twentysixth Street, and, do you know," she beamed, "I'm happier than I ever was in my life." She didn't line up with the rest when, as the prizes were held over each one's head, the audience declared the winners by its applause. "Let the young folks have 'em," she winked. Suit case by her side, she waited patiently for her dollar, and then alone and smiling started for her up-town car. "I've got three music lessons to-morrow," she giggled as we helped her aboard, "two of 'em in Hoboken! Good night-good luck," and disappeared in the queer old town.

The Bowery seemed genial enough that night, if not what it was of old. Even the stage-manager differed from the ogres of story, and listened, a sort of philosophic uncle, to the tales the hard-worked chorus told, as they hooked up each other's waists, of last week's

adventures or what they had had for supper. The Hebrew comedian was actually funny and lived just round the corner when at home. His mother and brother still kept there the family store from which he had fled some eight years since to join a stock company in Perth Amboy. He was only twenty-three now and getting a hundred dollars a week, and he worked for it every minute. He didn't even brag of what he could do to Broadway. "I had a couple of offers," he said, "but I'd rather stick to burlesque for a few years more—I want to smooth off the rough edges first."

The soubrette had also grown up on the upper East Side—a husky, hearty little girl with big blue eyes and a wide, boyish mouth, fresh as the flowers of May. She sat still as a mouse while her picture was made, thought it must be wonderful to draw like that, and that Raleigh had his nerve with him to make her so pretty. Nor did she seem to be bothering about having her name in electric lights on Broadway. She had gone on in the chorus in a couple of up-town musical comedies, she said, but she was glad to get back to burlesque again. A

musical comedy might rehearse for six weeks and blow up like a soap-bubble, but a burlesque show was thrown together in no time and there were thirty-five or forty weeks sure. "Mr. Miner knows me, and all the house managers on the circuit. It's like getting back home," she said.

And, of course, this—the steadiness of it is one of the compensations of burlesque. It helps to make up for shabby dressing-rooms, the comedian's personalities, and the twoperformance grind. There are no motor-cars panting at the stage entrance when the show is over, no dashing young financiers in evening clothes, but the job is there, at any rate, and will be to-morrow and next spring. The weary chorus girls can take it home with them to their boarding-houses and cheap hotels, and with the thought of it even the leading lady can solace herself, as, lingering for a few friendly glasses of beer with the orchestra leader and his wife and the man who wants to engage her at bargain wages for the summer, she recounts the machinations of the souhrette and how much worse she is treated in this show than ever before.



ΧI

JOHN BULL DISTURBED



BETWEEN the point at which a foreign invader would land on our coast and the nearest jumping-off place into the opposite ocean is some three thousand miles. From London in the east to Bristol Channel on the west of England is a trifle over a hundred miles, and from the county of Essex, where a German force would be likely to land, to the farthest point of refuge in the north of Scotland is only about five hundred miles—a mere pleasure stroll for our friend Mr. E. P. Weston. After feeling the creepy spell which Major du Maurier's picture of a German invasion exerted in New York. with the Atlantic Ocean between us and the nearest possible raider, it was not difficult to understand how it turned England upside down.

There had been, in the first place, a postmen's and telegraphers' strike, so that no news had circulated for days. For days, too, the south of England had been enveloped in an impenetrable fog. Stodgy old beef-eating Mr. Brown (of Myrtle Villa, Wickham, Essex, which, as you may recall, faces the North Sea just to the east of London) was indignant at its continuance. "If the Government had taken the matter in hand—that is to say, if—if steps had been taken—I venture to say—" "You mean, governor," grinned that flippant young clerk, Geoffrey Smith, "they'd have raised a wind." Mr. Brown stumped across the room, crumpling his newspaper and grumbling. "You've caught my meaning, I dare say, Geoffrey," he growled, "and expressed it in your own words."

The first act admits us to the bosom of this typical Smith-Jones-Robinson British family. They are in the play room. Bulldoggy Mr. Brown is busy with diablo. Syd, the youngest son, in a black-and-red blazer, criticises his father's "form" and reads from several authorities on the subject. The old gentleman defends his method of holding the left elbow glued to the hip, the right palm grasping the stick midway, etc., etc., even to the length of quoting from a letter in the *Times* on this vital question by an ex-cabinet minister. The

youth retorts that it's all very well if that's what he wants to do, but he'll never get any style. Reggie, with the spectacles, is working over this week's limerick contest; the eldest daughter is knitting; Amy and her near-sighted, lisping friend, Ada, from over the way, are enjoying the description of yester-day's football match as read from the sporting page by the slangy Smith.

Young Smith is one of that army—not unknown in this country—who follow the sports which occupy so much of their energies by shouting themselves hoarse at games and reading about them in next morning's papers. When Paul Robinson, one of the local Volunteers, enters in his khaki uniform, it is Smith who leads in ridiculing him. A rotten bad way of spending one's time, this lying down in the mud and shooting at a mark—if he were going to shoot he'd at least shoot at something alive; it would be more sporting. And Ada recalls that her brother shot two gulls last summer and one of them was flying. As for these Johnnies who are gassing about defending the country and all that sort of rot, let 'em tell him what they do in working hours. He works hard

John Bull Disturbed

nine hours a day and every day, looking at a blotter or out at a dirty wall covered with advertisements about tours to the land of the midnight sun. When he gets off he wants to have a bit of fun, and he'll jolly well see that he gets it. That reminds him—how he went out and got good and blind-o last Mafeking day and sang "Rule Britannia" from the edge of the fountain in Trafalgar Square and fell in and kissed the policeman who pulled him out and ran him in. And Amy and Ada giggle admiringly.

Even Mr. Brown, when appealed to by the young militiaman, suggests there's danger this volunteer business will encourage a spirit of militarism, from which, thank Heaven, England has thus far been free. The talk of invasion is absurd. He has no patience with it—none whatever. The heart of the country is sound, as any invader will find to his cost, and were these foreign scoundrels to land, every loyal Englishman would rush to arms and—and—"How," asks the innocent daughter from her knitting, "how, papa, does one rush to arms?"

And just about this time—after the deftest [239]

building-up of domestic atmosphere and, in view of what is to come, almost tragic satire on British complacency—little Syd, looking out the window, wants to know who all those Johnnies are in the garden!

Mr. Brown, furious at this trespassing on the precincts of an Englishman's castle, rushes to the side door, "Hey, there! What do you mean by this impudence! What's that? I can't understand you. Come here—here—right in here!" And in marches, at a brisk, businesslike stride, a soldier in service uniform. Mud spattered on his khaki, spurs rattling, a wonderful air of preparedness and efficiency. "Who are you?" stammers the volunteer, scrutinizing the uniform so like his own.

There is much violence and excitement later, but I doubt if anything more creepily impressive than the sudden materialization of this sinister figure out of the fog and the first rasp of the German accent as the stranger answers evasively, "How ar-r-re you, comrade!" whips out a note-book, and with the cold assurance of a man who has no time to waste fires a few staccato questions and scribbles down the answers.

In the next act the play room has been turned into a military headquarters. Orderlies bustle in and out, saluting and clicking their heels. A field telegrapher is clicking off messages in code. The commanding officer, at a table, studies his map and puffs a cigar, as commanding officers do in plays. Once, trying to recall the identity of a fellow officer, he runs over his note-book. "Ah, yes," he rumbles casually; "he was a head waiter in a hotel at Strasburg." The flippant Smith, a bit soiled but still incorrigible after a night's detention in the scullery, is brought before him.

"Don't you see," he protests, with wholly unconscious irony, "I'm not a soldier? I don't want to fight! I'm a spectator! I'm only one of the crowd."

The young man complains against the unwarranted attack. "If our fellows invaded your country they wouldn't go and attack a lot of harmless citizens."

The officer smiles a lofty imperial smile. "In my country," he rumbles. "there are no har-r-rmless citizens!"

The Germans retire presently, and the local militia, with rakish turned-up hats, handker-

chiefs in their cuffs, come rollicking in. Their business is to make the house a defensive position. Lieutenant Jackson, assigned to the upper story, wants to know how you do that.

"Roll the furniture against the doors, I sup-

pose, and all that sort of thing-what?"

"The aw—aw—the usual thing," sputters his rattled captain. "It's all in the book."

They don't know how to shoot. They have no range-finders, no doctors, no stretchers. One man is wounded by shrapnel and nobody knows what to do with him. Everybody is looking for orders and nobody knows how to give them-nobody except the color-sergeant, a regular attached for the time being to the Territorials, and a doctor who happens in. The girls try to help the wounded man, but the doctor sends even them away. They don't know how to do anything. Then the attack on the house begins. The young clerk, thinking only that he may be able to cut the office for a few days, and jubilant that the real show is about to start, hops on a table to get a better view. The first shot breaks the mirror behind him.

"That takes me off!" is his jocular shout. At the next shot he drops to his knees, falls

John Bull Disturbed

limply off the table, and rolls over, face up, in the glare of the footlights. And down goes the second curtain.

The third act continues with startling realism the attack on the house, ending with the retirement of everybody but Brown himself, who, although he doesn't know how to fire a gun, is determined to stay and prove that his home is his castle. He fumbles with a rifle, which is discharged, and a mirror comes crashing down; but at last, just before the enemy rush in, he succeeds in bringing one of them down. He is promptly disarmed and shot. As a civilian he had no right to defend even his own home.

Here the play should end, of course, but, as a concession to traditional prejudice, a rescuing party is permitted to rush in and turn the tables just as the curtain goes down. This fortuitous ending is not as disturbing as might be expected. Major du Maurier satirizes his countrymen with the observant eye of a humorist, then takes his perfectly real family up bodily and plunges them into what, to us at least, must seem an almost visionary invasion. It is as if he said: "Now we will imagine that this stage is a submarine boat. If the Browns are

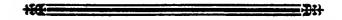
so careless, fancy what would happen if the water came in." We are duly horrified when the water comes in—only we know it isn't really water. And if the Browns hop up from the carpet and declare that they aren't really drowned, only an unusually scrupulous conscience would insist on assuring them that they were.

March, 1909.



XII

BY MR. BELASCO



IN a recent interview—we have returned for the moment to the year 1905—Mrs. Leslie Carter said that her new play, "Adrea," reminded her of Barnum's circus. Mrs. Carter did not intend to disparage Mr. Belasco by this comparison—merely that "Adrea" was so many-sided that it was as impossible to grasp it at once as to assimilate the details of a three-ring show.

There was much in what Mrs. Carter said. Adrea is a blind princess whom a jealous sister marries off to the court jester, a sort of dog-faced boy with red stripes across his countenance. . . . Many things happen after that. You might be able to understand them if it weren't for the fact that just as you think you do, in come a lot of barbarian soldiers or black slaves or senators, vestal virgins, wantons, or another dog-faced man with Thracian wild horses. There is much sound and fury, flashes of sunlight, queer music, mysterious voices

calling in the distance, and all the atmospheric sleight of hand which have given Mr. Belasco fame.

Through all this dazzling hodgepodge are interspersed "situations"—you can see him sitting before a row of pigeonholes, so to speak, dipping into them in turn. Now we get the odd numbers, 1-3-5-7, now 2-4-6-8, tacked up and set off as you would tack a pinwheel to a post, and blazing and fizzing out as dazzlingly and completely. No wonder Mrs. Carter said that "Adrea" takes in "all the emotions that have existed in the past, exist to-day, or will exist in the future." Here they are and with about as much organic relation as so many words in the dictionary. One can smile at the artificiality of tank drama, but Mr. Belasco is assumed to be serious, living in a purple artistic haze. And it is difficult to forgive faking done in the name of art, to view all this mouthing and mugging with equanimity.

February, 1905.

Every one should be entertained by "The Girl of the Golden West." The liking for

melodrama is as innate as that for the circus; and just as the circus, when taken from canvas to the Hippodrome, still holds its appeal, so one welcomes "Arietta, the Wild Girl of the Sierras," when she is promoted to Fortysecond Street, etherealized with magic lights and atmospheres, and acted right up to the limit. Merely literary merit it would be unreasonable to demand. Even here it is only occasionally that the bathos of the wizard's tricks disposes the spectator actually to tear his hair-when, for instance, the heroine lugs in Dante and Beatrice by pseudo-naïve reference to a story she'd read "about a man named Dant"-or such pseudo-homespun sentiment as "Thar's somethin' kinda holy about love"; or "Love is a kind of itchin' at yer heart what ya can't scratch."

Mr. Belasco reproduces what passes for the California of the Forty-niners as vividly as he conjured atmospheres in "The Darling of the Gods" and "Dubarry." His skill here is unquestioned. It is enough entertainment, almost, merely taking in the details of his stage pictures; things constructed with all the care with which music is orchestrated, with now

and then some detached figure—a pale-faced, snaky gambler smoking a cigar, a serio-comic hanger-on stuffing his mouth with food from the other men's lunch pails—balancing the whole, and, so to say, accentuating the key like the musician's pedal-bass.

Miss Bates is wholesome and vigorous as The Girl, Mr. Hilliard a dashing hero. As the gambler-sheriff, Mr. Keenan's mastery of repose, of minute and subtle stage business. amounts to something very like genius. He lights a cigar, and the spectator watches the match as he would watch the fuse of a dynamite bomb; he comes in out of a blizzard, and, standing motionless in the centre of the stage, warms an index finger by boring the tip of it into the palm of his other hand, and for some mysterious reason you are thrilled in every fibre. We can think of no one who would get more out of that ingenious scene in The Girl's house at night when she is trying to conceal her wounded lover. He is hidden in the rafters just over the sheriff's head, and the latter, unsuccessful in his search, is about to go out again into the storm. A drop of blood falls on the handkerchief in his hand. In the glare of

the spot-light the dark spot can be seen by every one in the audience. The sheriff slowly looks down, then up. He is tall and gaunt, all in black, face white as death. His gaze fixes itself on the rafters and then, in the silence, on the white handkerchief, drop—drop—drop falls the blood. The situation has the bite of theatric genius, and Mr. Keenan fairly eats it alive.

December, 1905.

Mission gardens and mission bells, tinkling mandolins, Spanish accent, confetti, señoritas, sunshine, silken shawls—all these the "Rose of the Rancho" gathers behind the footlights into that live picturesqueness for which Mr. Belasco is celebrated. Few places or periods offer a more engaging contrast to contemporary America than the old California of the dying Spanish days, and without jamming tricky and purely accidental phenomena of local color down one's throat he brings back the countenance of this banished time, and much of its feeling, truly and with charm. The drowsy, sun-drenched air of the mission garden is there as well as the good padre and

the mission bells; señoritas and cigarette-smoking gallants talk Spanish and laugh Spanish instead of being merely glorified cigar-box lids. There is a really beautiful confetti-throwing scene which some of our Latin-American friends say takes them straight back to the carnival days at home. There is a commendable abstinence from that familiar reaching out and fairly grabbing the applause of the gullible; and the people of the playexcept for a somewhat incorrigible habit of dropping on their knees and being picturesquely blessed—behave with no more eccentricity than is traditionally considered good form in melodrama. Mr. Belasco even eludes the bed toward which he normally flies as the iron filing to the magnet in the more acute paroxysms of his art. The nearest he gets to it is to cause his shy heroine to tell her new American suitor—with a peculiarly Belasconian ingenuousness—about the bedclothes and lovely nightgowns which are part of the trousseau of every Spanish bride.

The framework of the piece, written by Mr. Richard Walton Tully, deals with the clash between the Spanish settlers of California

and the gringo pioneers who tried to "jump" the lands. Such a "land-jumper" was Kinkaid of Nebraska, who, with his gang of a hundred ruffians, was about to seize the ranch of Señora Doña Petrona Castro, whose daughter, Juanita, was known as "the Rose."

Young Mr. Kearney, of Washington, in California on government duty in connection with disputed lands, had fallen in love with the young lady, and she with him, and he was naturally anxious to foil Kinkaid; so he got from Juanita the boundary papers, gave them to a young militiaman named Sammy, and sent him off to ride like mad to the land-office, register the claim, and return with help. Meanwhile, by pretending to join Kinkaid, he hoped to delay the eviction and the ruffianism which would follow. Meanwhile, also, the fiesta in honor of Juanita's approaching marriage to Don Luis de la Torre, whom Juanita loathed, was celebrated with much confetti, guitar playing, and general gayety. To the audience this scene is infused with romantic irony and suspense because of the fact that Kinkaid's gang is likely to smash into the patio of the ranch-house at any minute, and

because Juanita, for appearance' sake, has to go through the betrothal rites with a man she despises; and this suspense and irony become, of course, something terrific when Kinkaid's gang does burst in at last, and gallant Mr. Kearney, in order to save Juanita and her family-My God, Sammy! Why don't you come!-must pretend that he has deceived Juanita and is going to join Kinkaid in driving her family out. The suspense lasts for an act and a half-certainly one of the longest cases on record—until Sammy at last arrives with the trusty militia boys, covered with alkali dust, saves the day, and permits Iuanita to fall on the sturdy bosom of Mr. Kearnev.

February, 1907.

When the days grow short and frosty and folks come flocking back to town, certain pictures awaken and float fondly across the autumnal mind—things one would dream of, perhaps, locked away on some little explorer's ship and frozen in the Arctic ice. There is the brisk beauty of the avenue, for instance, at dusk, just as evening is beginning to hang out

her first premonitory lamps. There are people seated about a dinner-table, suffused in a grateful harmony of lights, colors, perfume, and flowing talk. There is the dusky arc of a theatre's orchestra stalls, just as the house settles back into a sense of communal pleasure, and, beyond the warm glow of the footlights, the curtain rises on some gracious world of comedy.

It is the privilege of city dwellers to participate in these things, to paint these interesting and sometimes even beautiful composite pictures by the mere process of living. It is not often, however, that theatre builders assist them much. The auditorium is too deep or gaunt. The decorations jeer, the lights affront.

Turn we now to the playhouse newly opened in Forty-fourth Street. . . . "The Grand Army Man" is the work of Pauline Phelps and Marion Short, rewritten by Mr. Belasco. The action takes place in a small Indiana county-seat in the early '80's. Wes' Bigelow, the Grand Army man, had loved a girl who married another man. The other man was killed in battle, and, after the war was over and the wife also dead, Bigelow adopted his rival's son.

The young man is sent by Bigelow and the other "old vets" to deposit \$1,000.47, which, with the tireless help of the Woman's Relief Corps and a prodigious number of ice-cream sociables, they had scraped together for the new G. A. R. hall. The unsophisticated youth, in love and crazy to make a million right away so that he may marry, falls in with a sharper who gets the money.

The revelation of the boy's disgrace comes on the night of opening the new hall, just as the children are singing "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," the W. R. C. ladies pouring lemonade, the veterans saluting the old battleflag and congratulating Wes' on having a fine boy like Robert, who could be trusted to ride off on his bicycle to a neighboring town with a thousand dollars in his pocket. Aware of this much of the plot, that Robert loved the proud judge's daughter and that the judge—a whitelivered villain who stayed at home from the war-not only forbade the match but presided at Robert's trial and sent him to the penitentiary, from which he emerged six months later, pardoned in time for a happy ending, the reader will ask no more. Mr. Be-

lasco's inspired local color, Mr. Warfield's extraordinary power for quaint realism and homely pathos, old vets, battle-flags, thwarted young love—it is, as the saying goes, almost a shame to take the money.

And, happily for the public, this is so. Mr. Belasco is so congenital a sob grabber and snatcher of applause that when his material is false his nimble wire-pulling becomes almost intolerable. Here his ingenuity for arranging effects, his real genius for photographic detail, appears at its best. There are such fathers, such sons, such G. A. R. men, such emotions as these. They were a plausible framework on which to hang a series of effective situations and that wealth of atmosphere which, as Mr. Belasco builds it up, is in itself a kind of literature. The suggestive realism of Wes' Bigelow's sitting-room—a sort of visualized domestic poem—the opening of the G. A. R. hall, the old court-room, with its lifelike counsel and audience, merge into a picture real and American and one that puts the Grand Army man in a light in which the present generation perhaps too seldom sees him.

Mr. Warfield, dropping his dialect, gives a

performance so simple and moving that one cannot escape the hope of seeing him soon in a rôle that will more highly test his powers. Now that Mansfield is gone it is not worthy the talent he possesses that it should be wholly devoted to parts which, however excellent as far as they go, inevitably become, when played night after night for years, the mere means of fortune grabbing.

November, 1907.

Among the instruments of torture still employed on the American stage is that fixed idea known as the "war play"—recently represented by "The Warrens of Virginia." The sacredness of this institution which, like the tariff, may be apologized for, shielded, or excused, but must be preserved unchanged at all hazards, was suggested by the first-night reviews. "The plot is the familiar one—a beautiful Southern heroine and a Northern lover, but the familiar idea is clothed," etc., etc. "There is the usual struggle between love and duty, and a misunderstanding not perhaps altogether logical or necessary, but the atmospheric charm with which Belasco," etc., etc.

In other words, a play of this sort is not judged as to its dramatic power or plausibility or its portrayal of any form of real life, past or present, but as to how nearly it fits a certain preconceived and petrified pattern of what such a play should be. Provided it does fit this pattern, it may be anything in the world; every critic rallies gallantly to its defence, and you may not touch a hair of its head without passing over his dead body.

This piece was written by Mr. De Mille and improved by Mr. Belasco. That is to say, instead of being frankly assaulted on entering the theatre, you are led up to a pretty woodland scene, with real water flowing over practical rocks, thence into an adroitly furnished living-room in a charming old Southern home -pleasantly distracted, in other words, from the main business of the evening, which is your slow but complete asphyxiation in impossible Southern dialect, cloying sentiment, far-fetched and tiresome "situations," and general falsity. The worst of it is that a considerable number of people to whom attending Mr. Belasco's ingenious exhibitions of emotional sleight of hand is also a fixed idea will

pay perfectly good money for orchestra seats and keep the show going, while honest workmen—like many this winter—must shut up shop. No wonder there are terrorists and dynamiters in the world.

January, 1908.

"The Concert" is adapted from the German of Herman Bahr by Mr. Leo Dietrichstein, who also acts—and acts well, on the whole its principal part. It is a delightfully true and amusing story of the domestic complications of a celebrated pianist and his wife. The "master," as his feminine adorers-pupils and hearers—are fond of calling him, is surrounded by impressionable women who transfer into sentimental admiration for the man the emotion so easily stirred by his art. These attentions the artist returns-amiably and with complete impartiality—partly for business reasons, for without the women, as he frankly admits, a pianist, like a novelist, could not exist; partly because his temperament demands the stimulus of feminine admiration and an atmosphere of more or less perilous romance. The capable wife, who understands him perfectly and knows how essential she is to him under all this surface philandering, tolerates this eccentricity with the same good humor that she does his absent-mindedness, and it is only when one of his adventures seems about to take a more serious turn that she adopts the retaliatory measures whose successful working out make up the action of the play.

Mr. Belasco, himself not without experience in the phenomena of the artistic pose, has given his usual perfect polishing to one of the season's most entertaining comedies.

November, 1910.

The principal character in "The Case of Becky" is a girl with two distinct personalities—the gentle Dorothy and the coarse and impish Becky, and the main business of the play is the gradual strengthening of the good personality and weakening of the bad, until Becky is finally "killed" and put out of the way forever.

The cure is effected through hypnotism, and we are introduced to the laboratory and sanitarium of a specialist in mental disorders and see hypnotism practised, not as by the charla-

tans of the rural stage, but as it might be used by a Doctor Weir Mitchell or Professor Münsterberg. We have felt compelled at times to quarrel with Mr. Belasco's photographic accuracy when it was merely a disarming outside to inner insincerity, but for the room in Doctor Emerson's house in which the two first acts take place there can be nothing but praise. Its warmth and comfort and air of having been lived in are an invaluable foil to the creepy nature of what goes on therein. Every detail has some reason for being-you should see how subtly "comic relief" is obtainedespecially in the next, the laboratory sceneby making the big, good-natured, "wholesome" young assistant grin to himself at especially trying moments as if to suggest to the spectators not to worry, that everything's coming out all right.

September, 1912.

"The Governor's Lady" is ascribed on the programme to Miss Alice Bradley, but the trail of Mr. Belasco is everywhere plain. Here is the familiar external realism and inner absurdity, the familiar attack on the easiest emo-

tions—impossible character changes accompanying mother's real Irish stew, crocodile tears wept into the real gravy.

Part of the time, to be sure, Mr. Belasco permits a stiff-necked consistency as unusual as it is refreshing. The governor's lady is a little old-fashioned woman who has not grown as fast as her husband. She has been cooking and washing while this self-made marvel improved himself. They started very humbly. When he "arrives" she is still, socially, where she was twenty years ago. She has no social graces, shrinks from meeting his new, fine friends.

The ambitious, coming man, needing a woman to preside over his fine establishment, is already at his wits' ends when he meets a keen young woman, whose natural taste for managing things is sharpened by coming back, after a few years in Europe, to her humdrum Western town. She is not, she thinks, above a marriage of convenience. The politician is a man who wants what he wants when he wants it, and his plan for a separation from his outgrown wife develops into that of divorce.

The wife at first knows nothing of the other

woman, and her stubborn refusal to "desert" the boy whose fortune she has helped to make, whatever his grown foolishness about politics—this mouse's defiance of the lion is admirable and stirring. The spectator's sympathy is still with her, when, after a very effective scene between the girl and herself, at the end of which the remorseful young woman breaks down and goes to the young man who has been waiting for her, the wife refuses to be reconciled.

When, several years later, on a winter night, in a Childs Restaurant in New York, the two meet again—the governor has been speaking in the East, the wife is going to Europe—it is reassuring to hear her "No, Dan!" as if she meant it. At last, one thinks, even in a Belasco play, there is somebody with genuine backbone. Presently the clock will strike midnight, the man browning butter cakes by the frosted windows will turn off the gas, the pale cashier tap the bell for closing. "No, Dan!" the little old lady will say, quietly but irrevocably. The successful man will go back to his successes, paying for them a little; the little lady will go her way, quiet and self-contained. The slangy

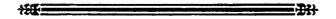
waiter will make some quaintly irrelevant comment and down will go the curtain on the Broadway lights and falling snow.

The sad fact must be recorded that this is not what happens. Into this harmonious nocturne comes the jarring "happy ending." The governor grabs his willing wife and riotously hustles her out. When will the people who try to give the public what it wants learn to let us be agreeably melancholy if we want to—that of all unhappy things the "happy ending" is often the worst?

October, 1912.



XIII IN SOCIETY



PEOPLE of a stern and rock-bound cast, intent on things they can "get their teeth into," often lament the inanity of society plays and dismiss them as a waste of time. For those whose daily vocation—like Mr. Shaw's when he was reporting concerts and art exhibitions—forces them to swallow so much sugar that when they get into the theatre they positively yearn for something acrid and bitter, this is no doubt true. For the more ordinary theatregoer, on the other hand, a cleverly written, well-acted society play may be one of the greatest time-savers in existence.

Society itself, for such a man, is likely not to be very satisfactory. It is bothersome and expensive to get into, and once there the life is hard and exacting. One has to change one's clothes too often, and then, of course, one must have the clothes to change into. Nor is the conversation, to one accustomed to the variety and surprises of the outside world, very inter-

In Society

esting. Society folk must keep up to snuff in a decorative way, as clergymen and uplifters do in another, and work hard inventing new and beautiful raiment, food, manners, and ways of doing nothing. And, while their work is important, unless we are to become a mere race of scowling grubbers, they become, like all devotees of a cult—actors or theosophists—narrow and inflexible toward other interests, and the outsider, after being with them a time, is generally glad to get back to the more haphazard and frivolous companionship of his kind.

The society play, on the other hand, gives one all the advantages of society with none of its disadvantages. By the mere purchase of an orchestra seat you can enjoy the emotions of having an expensive tailor, a "man," all the champagne you want, rebuffing gently but firmly the advances of beautiful ladies of title, or taking a cigarette from its jewelled case, tapping it with a bored air, and asking Carstairs or Lord Coldfront whether he prefers to meet you next month in Cairo or Monte Carlo. Nay—more. For the people in the play, instead of doing and saying the tiresome things they would do and say in actual life, are supplied

by the quick-witted author, who lives on the third floor back, where there is time and quiet to invent them, with the amusing adventures they would like to have had and the witty remarks they would never have thought of until the next day, if ever, by themselves.

Mr. John Drew, whose annual impersonations of himself have an unchangeable quality compared to which most other national institutions seem shifting and unreliable, becomes thus as beneficent as he has long been well beloved. How warm and homelike a feeling steals o'er the willing mind as one encounters the bill-board phrase, "Mr. John Drew in 'The Perplexed Husband'"—or was it "A Single Man," "His House in Order," "Jack Straw," or "Inconstant George"?

Again one sees the Empire Theatre and Mr. Drew entering in his well-made clothes. He touches a hand to his cravat, delivers a few lines of that quaint, "modish" patter of his, with final g's dropped, turns a hand back-upward at about the level of his lower coat pocket and deprecatingly surveys his finger nails, sits down, and with light deliberation flecks his right trousers leg along the crease;

In Society

and presently, with a line that leaves him master of the situation, stalks out the door at the rear of the stage, elbows slightly out, like some curious, stiff-necked, extremely aristocratic bird.

We are in Lady Rockingham's drawing-room, with firelight glowing richly on ladies' gowns, and wit, lights, voices, tempo all in so complete harmony that you wonder why the audience does not give a murmur of applause, as it would inevitably were a few Japanese lanterns hung about the stage or Long Island Sound painted on the back drop. Or we are at an English country house on a summer evening after dinner with the long windows open on the moonlit lawn. How far away—though separated but by a closed door—are the barbaric greenish-yellow lamps and the racket and manners of Broadway! How decorous and urbane the air!

These are but manners and surfaces, yet they have their place. There are moments for being merely civilized, as for thinking and work, and such a play is one of civilization's fine flowers. Of its kind it is finished—you can do more.

Mr. Drew does not, to be sure, always take us into "society." He introduces us to unpretentious vicarages and villas in the countryhow pleasantly unhurried and at home is the young husband (Mr. Drew's host, of course) with his politely casual interest as to what's happening "in town" and his comfortable russet shoes rather carefully not shined—yet Mr. Drew himself must ever live and breathe in his own peculiar air. He may be a middleaged literary person, as in "The Single Man," yet the spectator may be sure that he will be a Johndrew literary man, and wear only the most beautiful and expensive clothes, drink champagne with his dinner, be served by awestruck and velvet-footed slaves, and toss off without the slightest mental effort, in casual intervals which the audience never sees, everything from successful novels to profound treatises on fossils and sociology.

There seem to be three opinions of Mr. Drew as an actor. Some accept him at his face value, so to speak, without separating actor and play, and take it for granted because he is well known that he must be "good." The more critical, not much interested in his plays and

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feeling that the public doesn't care primarily for them, anyway, but for Mr. Drew, and not for what Mr. Drew might do if he had not petrified so early, but the reduced, conventionalized, smoothly enamelled general Johndrew idea which the commercial methods of our stage have finally evolved—these complain that Mr. Drew merely walks through a part impersonating himself. The still more esoteric explain that Mr. Drew's is the art that conceals art, and that not to perceive this is like thinking a man isn't acting merely because he isn't doing something showy, like Baron Chevreuil or Othello.

One may know that merely to act one's self on the stage requires great skill and experience and that finished light comedians are as rare as the dodo, and still not unreasonably wish to see Mr. Drew's talents escape from their circumscribed little region of well-dressed make-believe. In any case, however, quibbling over Mr. Drew's technic is about as exciting as discussing the proportions of silica or what-not that compose the Washington Monument. There it stands, and there, in his drawing-rooms and smart bachelor lodg-

ings, stands he. It is pleasant, each autumn, to know that he is coming back, and that no matter what cataclysm may have happened in the meantime he will not have changed—pleasant and good for our manners to breathe that tempered air.

Mr. Drew's unique position is partly due to the fact that he is one of the few American actors who can "look like a gentleman." Whether it is because we are kinder to younger sons, or because the social position of actors in England is more attractive than here, or merely because being a gentleman, in the narrower sense of the word, is a game like any other, which the English play better because it is their game and they've been playing it longer, it is undoubtedly true that few of our actors, however intelligent, patriotic, and good to their families, seem quite to catch the trick. Even Mr. Drew's gentlemanliness-one speaks, of course, but of stage personalityis a rather curious concoction of his own, resembling an accent, which, neither American nor English, but a curious arrangement of the two, has become, through long use, part and parcel of its creator.

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A too perfect "sincerity" is, indeed, not always desirable in these artificial plays. I remember how, while watching Mr. Drew's elegant author in "A Single Man," one could almost feel the bread snatched from one's mouth by the thousands who, fascinated by the prospect of getting something for nothing, might presently plunge into an already overcrowded trade. One felt a similar concern for the young and easily led while watching Mr. Bruce McRae—one of the most charming of stage gentlemen-play the middle-aged uncle to Miss Barrymore's Lady Frederick. A young man of title, it will be recalled, fell in love with Lady Frederick, and she could have had him with all his money had she not been sportsmanlike enough to invite him to her boudoir at ten o'clock in the morning and allow him to hold her false "switches" and watch her construct her complexion for the day. The susceptible youth was cured. Whereupon Mr. Paradine Fouldes, the young man's uncle and a former suitor of Lady Frederick's, having reached an age when he could see through complexions, suggested that she come and help him adorn a neat little house in Park

Lane. He intended to retire there and live on a few dried herbs, which, as Lady Frederick intimated, might be prepared by a French cook. In real life, Mr. Paradine Fouldes would have been a self-indulgent, fat, and flabby old muffin. Through the lines, Mr. McRae described a life which would produce some such result, and then made Mr. Fouldes resemble a highly intelligent and agreeable Greek god.

There are times, on the other hand, when "sincerity" succeeds in the most engaging fashion in the society play in making something out of nothing. The part of Mr. Algy Peppercorn, the exquisite young "tame cat" in Mr. Somerset Maugham's play "Smith"—especially as played by Mr. Hassard Short, who is particularly amusing at that sort of thing—was a good example.

As a matter of fact, Mr. and Mrs. Dallas-Baker did get on better when he was dangling about. He was always decorative, his epigrams amused them and their guests, and although he dropped in to take breakfast with Mrs. Dallas-Baker several times a week and helped her—for his taste was experienced and exquisite—select her hats and gowns, nothing would bore him so much, he frankly admitted,

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as to have to make love to her. He played golf just well enough to let the rather stodgy husband beat him on the last green, and he could always be counted on, when a couple of Rose's women friends dropped in for an afternoon, to make a fourth at bridge. Not a fool by any means, and possessed of an unashamed impudence which amounted almost to a sort of courage, he met and baffled the frank disgust of the returned ranchman with a witty cynicism no less forceful—even declined to stir from his chair when the brother threatened to throw him out of the room-knowing well enough, as he politely explained, that the other wouldn't attempt anything so brutal in the presence of a lady-although he retired nimbly enough when Rose asked him to go.

In short, the case of this precious young snipe was made with such apparent earnestness and logic by both author and actor, that, while the audience frankly detested him and he said enough unsympathetic things to supply the simple-minded villains of a dozen ordinary melodramas, he never lost their "sympathy" and they sighed whenever he left the stage and brightened up the instant he returned.

One of the most delightful and genuine little comedies of recent years, Mr. Hubert Henry Davies's "The Mollusc," while not exactly a "society" play (the Baxters' villa near London was like many a suburban home within thirty miles of New York, where all is sanitary, serene, and comfortable, and neither irregular hours, undue enthusiasms, smoking in the parlor, nor wearying thought is permitted to cloud the mirror of the still domestic pond), satirized a type generally associated, at least, less with the workaday than the more idle and decorative world.

Mrs. Baxter was pretty, perfectly healthy, and she had a complete disinclination for work, physical or mental, of any kind whatsoever. With her beauty, a selfishness so complete as to have become quite unconscious, and a diabolical skill in placing others at a disadvantage, she succeeded in avoiding all exertion and in bullying every one about her as completely as a school bully tyrannizes over younger boys with his superior strength. It was not by force, but by absolute inertia, that she did things. Her soft and indolent loveliness was as hard to penetrate as armor-

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plate or the walls of Port Arthur. She would send her husband or the poor governess on the most abominably unnecessary errands with the confiding smile of one imparting some intimate joke, only understood by the two. Poor, patient, grandmotherly Mr. Baxter was henpecked, not by force or shrewishness, but by his own uxoriousness and his wife's complacent molluskry.

Not that she whined or refused to do things —she didn't refuse to put the flowers in water. Indeed, she was glad to arrange them, if Tom would but bring her a vase; and as she was comfortably reclining with a novel at the time, Tom found it no more than decent to get the vase, although he had firmly determined that his sister should do it all, without help. The vase brought, there was the water to be thought of, and the nearest tap was outside in the garden. Tom got the water, too, at last; and now was she ready to arrange the flowers? Yes, all ready, Tom, but she must go up-stairs and get her apron first. What-ridiculous? Why, he surely wouldn't have her spoil her new frock for a few flowers? Meanwhile, there lay the flowers wilting, and the

result was, as always, that Mrs. Baxter had her way. It was a Doll's House, with a voluntary Nora.

It was the same when Miss Roberts wanted to leave. Miss Roberts had lost her family in a shipwreck and been forced to become a governess. She was capable and thoughtful and self-sacrificing, and hands, feet, and brain for Mrs. Baxter. The governess felt, however, that the children needed a better teacher and that it was her duty to go, but it was impossible to get Mrs. Baxter to discuss the matter. She was always too tired, or some convenient errand appeared. The poor young lady might actually have been immured there until she was old and gray had not Tom Kemp come back from Colorado.

The latter's efforts to cure his sister's molluskry and incidentally to woo Miss Roberts supplied the slight story. One expected, of course, a sort of Katharine and Petruchio result, but the author had the happy insight not to permit any improbable reformation. Only once did the young woman show the slightest appreciation of her own enormities, and that was when her brother furiously in-

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formed her that she was wearing her lovely dressing-gown and lying on the divan pretending to be sick merely because she knew it made her look pretty; a beatific smile slowly spread over her face, and she slipped down a bit farther on the pillow, with the egoistic rapture of one slipping slowly into a warm bath. She was, to be sure, galvanized into pseudo-activity when her husband turned to the governess after spraining his ankle-Mrs. Baxter had sent him up-stairs to move the furniture—and undertook to act as nurse. Even here, however, she was true to her character, and, smilingly oblivious to the fact that her husband was writhing in anguish, vigorously wound the bandages about his leg, boots, trousers, and all.

There was something Ibsen-like about this little household—indolent wife, enchanted husband, trim, capable governess usurping the wife's place—Ibsen making merry, if one could imagine it. It was true and deft as far as it went, really contributed something, answered the question—why, when life itself is so amusing, should any one wish to pay to be shut up in a theatre?



XIV EAST OF SUEZ



THE first scene of "Kismet" was well under way as I walked down the aisle, knowing, fortunately, almost nothing about the play except that Mr. Edward Knoblauch had written it, that it was very successful in London, and now playing or about to be played all over the civilized world. Fortunate, because otherwise I might not have been reminded of the importance of understanding the key in which an author's work is set and of how comparatively unaccustomed both audience and players are to-day to things set in a key of fantasy. The emphasis in these days is generally on the stunning accuracy with which a man strikes a match or masticates a wedge of apple pie, and if the outer shell of him looks lifelike he is assumed to be real, and few bother about how outlandishly his mind and heart may work. And beholding Mr. Otis Skinner in an unfamiliar, coffee-colored make-up, sitting in the street in front of a sort of temple, mouthing and waving his arms with what seemed

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unnecessary noise and artifice—followed by astonishing laryngeal phenomena from all concerned—one promptly drew profound conclusions on the artificiality of the stage in general and the tedium of this particular piece.

And it was not until bazaars and harems, mosques, muezzins, sword-bearers, incense, magic, and goodness knows what cataracts of Oriental color had fairly drenched us-more especially after Mr. Otis Skinner, as the hero, had choked to death one muffiny old gentleman with a long white beard, stabbed another, and drowned him in the harem pool, gayly pushing his head under water and watching the bubbles rise (behavior no hero of a modern realistic play would dare to risk with his audience)—that the dazzling idea flashed across me that this was not mere spectacular realism like "The Garden of Allah," for instance, but a dramatization of the spirit of the Arabian Nights, to be taken in exactly the same state of mind that you would take Sindbad sailing away on the roc's back, or the Forty Thieves boiling in oil. . . .

Mr. Richard Walton Tully's Hawaiian play, "The Bird of Paradise," like "Kismet," is

fairly dripping with color. Ringing would perhaps be as appropriate a word, for the quick pagan beat and velvety hum of Hawaiian guitars is never very far away, and whenever the action becomes acute—whether under the palms of the Puna Coast, or in the moonlight of Honolulu, or away up on the boiling crater of Kilauea—a convenient orchestra promptly throws in the sobbing breeze of its quivered strings.

The story of the play is that of a young American who goes to the tropics, marries a native Hawaiian girl and suffers the not uncommon degeneration. Another white man, a beach-comber, gone to pieces, too, but mostly through drink, is pulled up by the American girl the first man loses, and takes the former's place in the end. Meanwhile, the poor little Hawaiian, Luana, a creature born to laugh and love and sing and bask in the sun and swim, unable to make herself a white woman, finally—a sacrifice being needed to propitiate Pele—offers herself and, to the accompaniment of the wailing music aforesaid, throws herself into the volcano.

In spite of this somewhat lurid conclusion,

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Mr. Tully tells a moving story. The young sentimentalist, the virile and matter-of-fact promoter and plantation owner, the beach-comber and the pagan girl are types genuine to every remote tropical neighborhood, and the underlying riddle real and unanswerable.

The charm of the tropics is not—as popular opinion somewhat ingenuously seems to assume—the mere chance to cut loose and do what decency forbids at home. It is more subtle than that. It is its beauty, its spaciousness and grace which first allure and make our noisy sky-scraper and sweat-shop civilization seem uncivilized, cold, brutal, and absurd. As the British soldier, thinking of Mandalay in the grime and roar of London, says:

"Beefy face an' grubby 'and, law wot do they understand?

I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land."

The real danger to the white man is not in crude animalism, of which there is plenty at home, but that all sense-impressions, even the subtlest, become so vivid that they crowd out and nullify everything else. He feels, but does

not think. The sun satisfies. And after that, going to pieces is not difficult. Mr. Tully might have made a little more of this masked face the tropics wear—that he understands it one of his characters suggests when he speaks of the tropics "getting her flower-tipped fingers into your brain."

"Kismet" was unusual and good fun, but "Sumurun"—which Mr. Winthrop Ames has brought over bag and baggage from its successes in London and Berlin—is more unusual and even more fun. "Sumurun" is the real thing.

Both are Arabian Nights entertainments arranged for the stage, and therefore outside the spectator's usual zone of feeling and experience, but Mr. Knoblauch's play is more or less held down to this every-day area by the every-day actors who declaim its lines, and by the scenes which, brilliant and atmospheric as they are, differ from those we are familiar with, less in kind than in degree.

The Reinhardt stage pictures, on the other hand, as compared with the usual thing, have almost the "bite" of a poster compared with a photograph, and the wild Arabian Nights story they tell is swept breathlessly along by music and vivid pantomimic acting, not once brought down to earth by the intrusion of a spoken word. The result strikes a whole new set of theatrical nerves, so to speak, and is correspondingly fresh and entertaining.

A great deal has been written about Professor Max Reinhardt's stage management, but its essential quality appears to be the elimination of detail and the concentration of emphasis—especially through the intelligent use of light and color—on significant points. It is impressionism applied to the stage.

While "Sumurun" can scarcely be compared with the domestic dramas which have made Mr. Belasco's name, Professor Reinhardt's work here is doubtless characteristic, and it is quite at the opposite pole from Mr. Belasco's. The latter makes his stage pictures by an intelligent heaping up of photographic detail: brooks with real water, storms with real rain, rooms that look as if they had been lived in—fireplaces, lamps, coat hooks, old pictures, goodness knows what, done just so.

The German wizard's method is, appar-

ently, just the reverse of this. He flattens his background down to almost nothing—to a mere symbol, so to speak. Here, for instance, are all the principal characters hurrying hotfoot to the Sheik's palace—the grim chief himself; his favorite wife, the beautiful Sumurun, and her handmaidens; his amorous son; the chest containing the love-sick silk merchant and the supposedly lifeless body of the hunchback; the wanton slave girl; the funny, jiggly janitor of the bazaar.

Away they go across the scene, like the characters in an old-fashioned melodrama after the third act, each with his own characteristic tempo, and the background is scarcely more than two flat bands of color—the white wall against which they stand out and—painted on the drop as I recall it—the sky and the flat, black silhouette of the palace towers. No time is lost in setting the scene, the attention is concentrated on the moving figures, and the flat silhouette of the palace towers is far more suggestive, under the circumstances, than any attempt at genuine perspective could be.

Or, again, he shows the outside of the

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hunchback's theatre—merely a door and a flat wall with a grated window above it, but this grating is set in a square of the vividest indigo blue, making all the more vivid as she appears behind the grating, the slave girl's brown skin, white teeth, and flashing eyes.

The scene changes and we are inside the theatre, and a story like that of "I Pagliacci" is told, compressed into a few minutes' pantomime—in the centre the hunchback's tiny stage, with the eager, lamp-lit faces of his audience turned toward, instead of away from, the real audience, as at the opera. To the left, in the shadow, the fickle slave girl and, presently, her lover. Here again the background is flattened and simplified down to almost solid shadow, against which the lighted faces of the mimic audience—only a handful are needed stand out, a splash of vivid color. What you get is not an actual crowd, as at the opera, but the idea, the suggestion of a crowd—and this is characteristic of Reinhardt's method. He hits the imagination instead of merely filling the eye.

As an entertainment, "Sumurun" is as old as the hills rather than new—as old as the

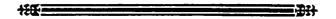
Punch and Judy show. One watches horror sweep after horror with the same sense of detachment, of childlike delight. The remote scene, the Arabian Nights spirit in which it is all conceived—with broad humor alternating with horror—partly explains this; it is partly due to the skilful speed with which one thing follows another, before you have time to think; and most of all, perhaps, to the absence of spoken words. It doesn't bother one very much if poster people do sew each other up in sacks or slash each other's heads off. And so with all its superficial violence, "Sumurun" sweeps by like a landscape—scarcely touches more than one's eyes and ears and taste for wild romance. Here is a play which is real "play," which sends one back into Broadway with the delightful sensation of having been away from New York.

February, 1912.



XV

"THE GREAT AMERICAN PLAY"



PLAY-WRITING has become an avocation so common in America that here and there it might almost be included among the popular sports. With those who write at all, not to be trying a play is almost to be odd, while innumerable amateurs, in the intervals of their regular work, take a flier, as it were, at this difficult art, and now and again actually get a play put on.

There are courses in play-writing in the colleges, magazines devoted to play craftsmanship, leagues for encouraging good plays and their audiences. The stage is closer to the ordinary man's life than it used to be, and those who feel they have something to say are more and more turning there to say it.

This change is largely due, no doubt, to a changed understanding of the drama, to the enthusiasm for the drama of every-day life which Ibsen's plays did so much to encour-

age, the growing realization that the theatre should be democratic and intelligent and open to all the influences of our complicated actual life. In our country, moreover, the awakening of conscience—"muckraking"—of recent years has had much to do with bringing new blood into the theatre.

In the days when Bronson Howard's "Aristocracy" and "Shenandoah" held the boards it would scarcely have occurred to a public-spirited citizen, not a professional playwright, to fight cocaine selling by dashing off a little piece about it—like Mr. J. M. Patterson's "Dope"—to be played in vaudeville.

In this sketch, two young altruists went into the slums to get evidence against a fourth-rate druggist who was debauching the neighborhood by selling cocaine. They caught their man, telephoned for the police, and then, while the patrol-wagon was coming, it was brought out that the druggist got his cocaine from the firm of manufacturing chemists founded by the young man's father, and that the proprietor of the tenement whose extortionate rents had driven the druggist to sell cocaine in order to live was the mother of the young

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woman. The air was hot at the time with protests against the cocaine traffic and the willingness of respectable landlords to shut their eyes to the sources of their incomes; and "Dope," sandwiched in between clog-dancers and sentimental balladists, had all the bite of a red-hot editorial in the evening's paper. The music-hall was used for a new purpose—as you would use a hired hall or the end of a truck.

There have been many American plays with this controversial, reforming basis, interesting as a sign of wide-awake intention, at any rate, however indifferently built. This same new enthusiasm has adventured, without so explicit an ethical burden, into the most varied aspects of American life. Mr. Eugene Walter shows us the acrid existence of the small city clerk trying to live on nothing a year; Mr. James Forbes, the slangy likableness of the chorus girl; Miss Margaret Mayo, the "inside" view of the circus. Mr. George Cohan writes and sings with genuine feeling of the brassy life of Broadway. Mr. Thompson Buchanan goes out into the Kentucky mountains and laughs at the vendettas-generally treated romantically-some-

what as Mr. Shaw laughed at militarism in "Arms and the Man." Mr. Edward Sheldon tackles the political boss, the Salvation Army, the negro question, almost before he is out of college. In Mr. Edgar Selwyn's "Country Boy" we share the smelly, homesick air of a New York boarding-house, in Mr. Jesse Williams's "The Stolen Story" and Mr. Patterson's "The Fourth Estate" learn how reporters work and feel and see the very paper coming warm from the press. Plays like these and a score of others may have no startling significance, but they are characteristic of an increasing interest in and familiarity with the theatre, a readiness to use home-grown material and use it in our own way.

The health of the American theatre in this direction is all that could be asked. And in spite of the scant appreciation given at times to distinguished work, American audiences are more open and sympathetic—to judge by the reception given the plays of Ibsen and Shaw, for example—to new experiences in the theatre than those of England. In the matter of individual accomplishment, however, not so much may be said.

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Mr. Clyde Fitch—I speak but of the writers coincident with this changing time—wrote charmingly and with astonishing ease. Mr. Augustus Thomas is always vigorous, entertaining, and thoroughly American, yet neither of them has the sustained skill of Pinero nor the distinguished fancy of Barrie, nor the wit and grown-up intellectuality of Mr. Shaw. Our younger men, taken together, could scarcely be set beside Mr. Galsworthy and the younger English realists, nor have we any wholly indigenous movement corresponding to that represented by the Irish players and their plays.

Just what the "great American play," so frequently mentioned on the bill-boards, ought to be, or how important it is that it should be "American" is not altogether clear. Great plays incline to be universal and, indeed, in the nature of things, the quality of nationality reveals itself less readily on the stage, where action is indispensable, than in the novel, where so much may be described. The generalization cannot be pressed, especially in the presence of the more modern play, where character is everything and action, in the sense of mere bustle, almost nothing at all; but

there is an essential difference between the arts, nevertheless. It is one thing, for instance, to describe a girl's blue eyes and another to make her talk as if she had blue eyes.

It is desirable, at any rate, that American play-writers use the life about them and not merely imitate foreign models or pass off as their own people Frenchmen or Russians in American clothes. A powerful play on the clash between a man's wife and his mistress might be set in an American scene, but the theme would not seem to spring from the soil as it might in another country, where the husband's merely sentimental vagaries are more or less overlooked provided he is good to his family, according to local standards, and sees that the integrity of his home is preserved. The play would not belong here in the sense that "The Pit"—in which a husband neglected his wife for his business-belonged to Chicago.

One of the most "American" plays of recent years, so far as its theme was concerned, was "The Melting Pot" of Mr. Israel Zangwill, who happens to be an English Jew. "Here you stand," said the hero, of the immigrants at Ellis Island, "in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to—these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians—into the crucible with you all! God is making the American!"

The young man was a Russian Jew, whose family had been slaughtered at Kishineff. Behind him was the memory of the massacre and the "cold butcher's face" of the officer who directed it. He himself had been wounded in the left shoulder, and his violin, resting there, roused the wound sometimes. Before him was this new world—no wonder he saw it in the bright light in which it appeared to its founders.

He met Vera Revendal while playing his violin at a settlement house and the young people fell in love. But this love had to be tested in the crucible, too, and out of that Mr. Zangwill made his play.

Miss Revendal was the daughter of a Russian nobleman. She had revolted against the

ideas of her father and migrated to New York, but she still had an orthodox Russian's prejudice against Jews. And she could not surrender without a struggle. That was her test.

Her father was the Russian officer whom David had seen at Kishineff. When he came to New York to find his daughter, and the face which had so long been hovering in the young musician's consciousness suddenly confronted him, the old madness returned. In the scene between the two men which followed, the remnants of Vera's vague uneasiness, of the centuries of Jew loathing, were brushed away, but for David an impassable barrier seemed to rise. He could hear the church-bells ringing again and the simple people exchanging good wishes, and see his mother and father and little sister—and what followed.

This was his test. His symphony was played at last with great success, but failure seemed to shriek from the violins and thunder from the drums. For he had been false to his music, "gloating over the old blood-stains," denying that his own hate could be dissolved in any melting-pot. When he was able to see this at last he and Vera were standing on the roof of

the settlement house looking out over New York. The sun was setting and the jagged sky-line was ablaze.

"There she lies," he cried, "the great melting-pot—listen. Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth—the harbor where a thousand mammoth feeders pour in their human freight. Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian. How the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem, where all nations come to worship and look back, compared to the glory of America, where all nations come to labor and look forward!"

Mr. Zangwill's play had faults which made it inacceptable to the provincial New York audience and it was received much more warmly by more American Chicago. It was "literary" and over-rhetorical, but there was poetry and power in it, nevertheless, and a conviction common to all Americans put into words—a deeper and more resonant American note struck than is often heard on our stage.

Mr. Fitch, with all his sensitive eye and ear and nimble craftsmanship never struck

it, although he could always be counted on for closely observed bits of mosaic which caught the very breath of minor aspects of American life, especially of New York. Mr. Fitch was a flower of the city asphalt rather than the soil, and more at home in drawingrooms, millinery shops, and restaurants than with farmers, travelling salesmen, business men with cigars in their faces, pioneers. The low diapason of the wheat, which Frank Norris heard rumbling up from millions of acres of Western prairie, through the pit at Chicago and on across the earth, was too vast and chaotic a sound for his sensitive ear, and even when he did touch Wall Street or business. the spectator somehow felt that he was writing from an up-town bachelor apartment, carefully furnished with European objects of art.

The Americanism of Mr. Augustus Thomas, on the other hand, is all wool and a yard wide, as the phrase goes. He knows East and West, Broadway and the cattle-range, is at home with all sorts and conditions of men. America is implicit in every line of his plays, but it is understood rather than expressed, more a matter of flavor than of theme.

"The Great American Play"

Such a play as "Arizona" is soaked with the atmosphere of the old West, when desert army posts were needed and cattle still roamed the unfenced range. Here is old Canby, the ranchman who ruled like a prince over his twenty miles of blazing valley, and scarce admitted the right of the United States troops to trespass there; the grizzled cavalry colonel "married to his granddaughter"; the young wife, restless at the army post, and charmed for the moment by the villainous captain's tales of "God's country" and the life "back East"; noble young Lieutenant Denton, interfering to save a woman's honor, only to be misunderstood and marched off—tramp, tramp, tramp—to the guard-house; Tony, the Mexican vaquero, bringing swift death to the villain at last with a quick shot from his revolver; all this in the vivid Arizona sunshine —desert dust on coats and hats, the rattle of hoofs off stage, and the bugles of the Eleventh calling in the distance—it's a fine old play, with a strong masculine humor and the kind of thrills that never grow old.

Yet the main theme—an intrigue between a restless young wife and a dashing would-be

seducer—is as old as the theatre. It did not spring unmistakably from the soil, like the fight between the farmers and the railroad in Frank Norris's "Octopus."

In the plays which followed his earlier melodramas—light, sketchy pieces like "De Lancey" and "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots"—Mr. Thomas seemed a journalist, writing for the stage instead of a paper, with a newspaper man's lively interest in the world about him and an unmistakable gift for catching its warm, humorous surfaces. His work might be uneven and careless, yet there was always some flash of strong masculine humor—drawn, perhaps, from the day's news—some glimpse of character, which welded the scene to real life as the average American lives it.

Mrs. Pipp, in Mr. Thomas's dramatization of Mr. Gibson's drawings, was embarrassed by what the French count called her embonpoint. "What?" asked her much-abused husband. "Ombongpwong," said Mrs. Pipp. "I don't know what it is," sighed Mr. Pipp, "but it sounds like a piece of war news." "That's just how much water you draw," said Mr. Pipp, explaining to the young treasurer in his

bank why the latter wasn't regarded as an eligible suitor by Mrs. Pipp. He told of the changes since he began life in Ohio and Mrs. Pipp's father kept a sailor's outfitting shop. "Why, her back hair used to smell of pine tar in those days," said Mr. Pipp. "When I was working I was well every day," he continued, telling of his retirement from business. "Now I have all the symptoms of all the diseases in the mineral-water advertisements."

"Men will be men," sighed the lady from South Bend in "The Rangers," "especially

white men in a tropical country."

"Why," De Lancey was asked, "do your friends bring you whiskey?" He had had a fall from his horse and broken his collar-bone, but he didn't want Miss Marple to know it. "Because," replies De Lancey, "they are my friends." On being asked by an introspective young woman why he knew life was worth living he promptly replied: "Why"—I paraphrase from memory—"because it's full of pretty girls and friends and excitement and fun—because it is." The testimony of his senses was good enough for him.

The fact that the playwright was felt to

share De Lancey's content with the visible world gave special interest to his venture into the world of subconscious forces in "The Witching Hour" and "The Harvest Moon." While these represent an excursion somewhat apart from the special subject under consideration here, they are pertinent to it in this sense—that, without losing his power to entertain, Mr. Thomas was more consistently effective here than in his sketchy pieces, and took his audience into new and unexplored regions of serious and stimulating thought. A murder, committed by a nervous boy thrown into a fit of insanity by the sight of a cat's-eye jewel, a morbid fear of which he had inherited, began "The Witching Hour" and the main action consisted of the efforts of his family and friends to save him from conviction.

The junction between the two worlds was not always plausible, but there were scenes, like that in which the spirit of a lost sweetheart (in this case the boy's grandmother) influences a decision of the Supreme Court, as effective as they were unexpected. It was interesting, again, to see the effect of suggestion on a jury. One of the boy's friends has per-

mitted the newspapers to publish a secret which would shake considerably the power of the prosecution. But how could the jury know it? "Five hundred thousand are reading that story now," cried the friend, "excited about it, absorbed in it, loathing Frank Hardmuth. All this part of the country is thinking one thing. Do you suppose anything can keep that thought from affecting the minds of these twelve men in the jury-box?"

And with this new material was presented a characteristic Thomas figure-an amiable. finely pickled, check-suit-red-tie-and-diamondhorseshoe old Kentucky sinner, who would have "matched with Destiny for beers" at the Pearly Gate itself. He had lost two hundred thousand dollars, first and last, but he calculated that this only meant an expenditure of four thousand dollars a year, and, after all, he "had lived." After the Louisville gambling-house had closed and the sobered proprietor, standing with back turned across the room, read Ellinger's poker hand, all that Ellinger could say was: "And God Almighty gives you a mind like that, and you won't go with me to Cincinnati!"—where gambling was

still going on. The other's chastening began at last to affect him, too. Visiting some nymph of his acquaintance, he got no further than talking about the weather. "It cramps my style!" said he. "I want reform all right, but I want to fall good and hard first!"

In "The Harvest Moon" Mr. Thomas dealt again with unseen forces, and this time discarded shrieks and violence and even his usual broad humor and depended throughout on a conversational tone and a straight appeal to his audience's intelligence and human sympathy. I should say that never had he seemed to go about his work with such assurance as in this quiet but absorbing presentation of the effects of suggestion on an impressionable young girl. All her life she had been pursued with the notion that she had inherited flighty, not to say immoral, tendencies from her mother, who, after an unhappy married life in this country, had disappeared in Paris. The action reveals the sinister results of this suggestion and the efforts, finally successful, of a guest of the family, a French playwright and amateur psychologist, to restore her selfrespect and assist her to "find herself."

The scene was Lenox, Massachusetts, and the Harvard professor, the French amateur, and the whole drift and manner of the piece suggestive of Mr. Thomas's development. At the moment, this development seems to have carried his ship a bit out of the wind. Like the journalist who sometimes impairs his original usefulness by becoming "too serious" -spoils a good reporter to make a bad philosopher-he seems blanketed a bit by his own thoughtfulness. General ideas absorb him at the expense of the special technic demanded by the stage until some of his more recent plays suggest the advisability of a vacation in the care-free air of old-fashioned melodrama.

Mr. Richard Harding Davis, on the other hand, seems able to maintain in the most untoward circumstances his characteristic just-off-the-yacht point of view. If he had entered the Forbidden City of Lhassa with Colonel Younghusband's expedition, he might have been profoundly impressed with his own newness and rawness in contrast to that mysterious and mouldering old civilization, and strained to grasp the local significance of things, but

there is every reason to assume that the story he sent home would have sounded as if he had just stumbled on the Grand Lama's temples while riding down Fifth Avenue at dinner time in a hansom cab, with front-row theatre tickets in his pocket.

In his farce, "The Galloper," which later, with the addition of music, became "The Yankee Consul," he turned his characteristic gaze—that of a New York young-man-abouttown—on the Greco-Turkish war of '97, and the spectator was agreeably startled to see young Mr. Copeland Schuyler, of New York, a Casino soubrette known as "The Human Fly," a widow from Newark, N. J., who owned a department store and two breweries, busying themselves in the shadow of the Parthenon. "The Human Fly" described to a recent husband her success on Broadway.

"How did you like my new act?" she asked.

"It made me laugh," assented the husband.

"Laugh!" cried the young woman. "It isn't meant to make you laugh. When you see a woman turn four somersaults in the air and light on the back of her neck, does that make you laugh?"

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"It does," observed the husband, "if I'm paying her alimony."

In order to escape from this enchantress, the husband, a war correspondent, was delighted to lend his name to Schuyler, who, in turn, was equally anxious to pretend to be a war correspondent in order to follow to the front a Red Cross nurse. Mistaken for the real correspondent, who had once fought with the Cretans, Schuyler was carried to the Piræus on the shoulders of a mob of admiring Greeks and compelled to make a speech.

"Men of Athens!" he shouted, "remember Marathon! (Applause.) Remember Thermopylæ! (Wild applause.) Remember Andrew Jackson! (Shrieks and roars of applause.) What has the Republican party ever done for Greece! (Thunderous outburst of enthusiasm.)"

Clean, boyish fun this, aimed at the ribs rather than the cold chambers of the brain, and as characteristically American in its light-hearted disregard of the Old World as "Innocents Abroad." A sort of boyishness, innately kind and clean, however bumptiously expressed, is, indeed, characteristic of our lighter plays. Such a piece as the British farce, "Mr.

Hopkinson," played over here a few years ago, could never have been written here. Hopkinson was a servile, beastly little cockney who fell into a fortune and tried to break into society. The actor who played the part managed so nearly to suggest a human pig that the mere look of him started a laugh, and the clever, brassy cynicism of the titled "bounders" who led him on and bled him was undeniably funny. The piece enjoyed some success here, but it was almost as "foreign" as if it had come from China. The laughter seemed a little shamefaced, as if it were directed at a lunatic or a drunken woman, and ought to come, not from Americans nor the English in their more comprehensible moments, but from an audience made up of those raw-boned. Yahoo-like creatures, with horse teeth, pith helmets, and sailor straw hats, which "Le Rire" or "Jugend" presents as typical of the British Isles.

Mr. Ade could not have written such a piece though the full force of his Indiana irony were engaged in the fray. The most craven of his victims would yet inspire a not unkindly smile and seem, with all his absurdities, to be embarked with us on a common adventure. Even

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Mr. Cohan, noisily celebrating cheapness and vulgarity, is yet a sort of poet in his way. There is something naïve and whole-souled in his frank materialism. He speaks from the heart and chants of "putting it over," getting the better of the "rubes," collecting a "roll," and so on, as the lark sings to the sun.

The light-heartedness and apparent approval with which "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford" set forth the notion that it makes little difference how you make money provided you do make it might seem as shocking to an Englishman and characteristic of Yankee "cuteness" as "Mr. Hopkinson" seemed cruel to us. Wallingford's point of view is more common than most of our regenerate would care to admit, but not more American than the more humane one expressed in Mr. Winchell Smith's "The Fortune Hunter." In this amusing piece a gilded city youth went down to a little Pennsylvania town with the intention of marrying an heiress. There always is an heiress in such a town, a friend told him; the eligible men go away to the city, and you have only to wear becoming but quiet clothes, appear studious and dependable, and the girls

do the rest. They did in this case, but meanwhile the young man had come to like work, turned the shabby village drug store into a dazzling and profitable palace, and acquired so many sterling virtues that, of course, it wasn't the uppish banker's daughter who finally captured him, but the quiet Cinderella who had helped him tend shop.

The kindly human feeling, the approval of hard work, thrift, and what are occasionally called the bourgeois virtues—the Americanism, in short—of this little comedy, was the inspiration of "The Man from Home" which, in spite of obvious defects, seemed to me one of the significant American plays of recent years.

One not infrequently hears the Easterner, or amiable foreigners new to our land, speak of the "Middle" West as a region beyond the pale. Such persons can understand living in New York, or roughing it in the picturesque "far" West, among grizzlies and buffalo, for quite nice people, English younger sons and so on, do that. But that one could exist happily in Columbus, Ohio; or Indianapolis, Indiana; or Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is beyond them alto-

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gether, and in planning to cross the continent they speak of the region between the Alleghenies and the Rockies as one would speak of that part of a journey consumed in passing through tunnels or a fog.

Curiously enough, the natives of this region like it, return to it as "God's country," persist, amidst pleasures and palaces, in regarding it as home. Mr. George Ade might travel to the ends of the earth, as, indeed, he has done, but would "come from Indiana" were he in Paris or Timbuctoo. Mr. Marshall, in leaving Indiana to become Vice-President, is besought in poetry by Mr. Meredith Nicholson not to forget that he is a Hoosier, nor desert the comic muse—to remain, even in Washington, simple, humorous, and kind. In short, here are people who feel that they have something which more than makes up for flat land, new paint, and lack of the storied urn. In his novel, "The Gentleman from Indiana," Mr. Tarkington tried to explain this feeling and took pains to choose as his scene one of those very towns, at which the Pullman car passengers, looking up from their novels, shudder as the limited whizzes by. In "The Man from

Home," written in collaboration with Mr. Harry Wilson, the message was repeated in the theatre.

The play introduced us to Miss Ethel Simpson and her brother Horace, who were from Kokomo, Indiana, but doing their best to forget it. They were at Sorrento, Italy, and ashamed of their own country. They had hyphenated their father's middle name to his last, and when some one addressed young Horace as "Mr. Simpson" instead of "Mr. Granger-Simpson" he affected not to understand. When asked if he were not an American he would answer, "I was born in the United States," and explain that he had not been there for many years.

Ethel was engaged to the Hon. Almeric St. Aubyn, who was scarcely more than the conventional silly Englishman of musical comedy, but poor Ethel was too hypnotized by the romantic thought of ancestors who had fought at Crécy and Agincourt to see him as he was. The young lord wished a settlement of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and she and Horace were but too delighted.

Before the marriage could take place, how-

ever, Miss Simpson's guardian must give his consent. This brought Daniel Voorhees Pike to Italy. Pike was the guardian—the man from home. He had known her father and he could not believe that that father's daughter need pay any man seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars to get him to marry her. He supposed that the settlement must be the Earl's idea. that, of course, the young man himself couldn't dream of such a thing. It was impossible for him to comprehend, as Ethel pointed out, how these things were regarded by a man of the world. His ingenuous but keen remarks, the sordidness of the sham "gentlefolk" into whose clutches the Simpsons had fallen, the touching fashion in which Ethel idealized her alliance with "a noble house"-just as other American heiresses have done—provided excellent comedy.

The man from Indiana was not, however, a merely impersonal advocate of the ideals of living approved in Kokomo. He was in love with Miss Granger-Simpson himself. For years he had had her picture on his bureau and in his heart, and he had a fine old house on Main Street, with a big front lawn and trees—in

which he dreamt Ethel Simpson would some day be sitting at the piano singing his favorite song, "Sweet Genevieve." His chances seemed slim, however, as the curtain went down on the first act, and the Hon. Almeric having heywhatted himself away, Pike asked, "If they pay seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for that, I wonder what they pay for a real man!"

The ensuing intrigue need not be recalled—the upshot was that the Hon. Almeric proved too insufferable at last even for the young Indiana girl's incorrigible idealism, and the whole crew of "gentlefolk" were finally sent packing. The disillusioned Miss Simpson, having said farewell finally and forever to the man from home, sat down at the piano and began to sing "Sweet Genevieve." Mr. Pike was making for the house with all speed as the curtain went down.

As dramatic art "The Man from Home" was not important, but as a statement of faith, an explanation, in a way, of what this mysterious thing might be that makes life in the Middle Western deserts worth while, it was very important, indeed. To be sure, it was provincial, as all of us must be, in one

sort or another, unless we be mere men without a country. The fake gentlefolk against whom the simple virtues of Mr. Pike stood out so strongly were scarcely more than caricatures; as a stand-up trial of kind hearts and coronets, aristocracy scarcely got a run for its money.

Yet even this, perhaps, was less by way of humbling the Hon. Almeric than of throwing a rosier glow about the young girl from Kokomo. The nobility he had lost, in fact, still lived in her dreams—there was pathos in her wistful illusions. And through the man from home himself, uncouth, dependable, humorous, and kind, not merely Daniel Voorhees Pike, but hundreds of humdrum little inland towns were speaking. Behind the play was the conviction their people live by and would fight for, yet could not put into words.

It was important that it should be expressed—it is by such kindly ministrations that art makes every-day life richer and more interesting—yet "The Man from Home" was special pleading, for all that. It did not give that 2+2=4, thus-it-was-and-could-not-be-otherwise feeling one gets from the less top-ical, more impersonal kinds of work.

A Spaniard or an Austrian might have seen little in it. He would have got much more from Mr. William Vaughn Moody's "The Great Divide." The theme of this, while it sprang naturally from American soil, was more universal in application. The great divide was not merely the Rocky Mountains, but the line drawn everywhere between nature and convention, between the daring to do and the fear of what has been done.

The woman in the play, Ruth Jordan, came from Millford Corners, Massachusetts. The Jordan house was of the old-fashioned New England pattern, and from the walls of its sitting-room the Puritan ancestors of the family stared down a thin-lipped warning against being too happy in a world built for self-abnegation and sacrifice. The young woman and her brother went out to Arizona to live on a ranch in the Gila Desert country.

Like many a scrupulously civilized person before her, Ruth Jordan seemed to become a new creature. She looked on those magic lights and colors, stretched out her arms toward the magnificent spaces, and felt as if for the first time in her life she were free. She began almost

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to fear that some punishment must follow this undeserved happiness, while little Polly Jordan, Philip's wife, shook her head and said that if the time ever came when the thrill and happy yearning of this new existence should run, slap-up, against the rock of Ruth's essential Puritanism, then there would be trouble.

As yet there was no man in the case—only young Doctor Newbury, who had grown up with Ruth and gone to school with her. He was Safe and Sane, as the Republicans used to say, and loved Ruth earnestly. One had but to look at him and hear his honest, vaguely reproachful voice to know that he would be just as earnest and just as good no matter where you put him—at the North Pole, in Rio de Janeiro, up in a balloon. He was a fine fellow, but had no fourth dimensions. Ruth admired Newbury and wished he could make her fall in love with him. But, as she confided to Polly Jordan-and charmingly authentic it sounded as spoken by Miss Anglin-"he's so finished! He's all done. I don't want a man who's finished."

One night a ranchman broke his leg and the other three rode away for the doctor and left

Ruth alone. Three men, on their way home from a dance, drunk, saw her light. They waited until she had put it out, then smashed in the door. With her back to the wall, and two of the men—a Mexican and a sodden bronco-buster—snarling and ready to shake dice for her, she threw herself on the mercy of the third, the best man. If he would save her from the others and from himself, make her his wife, she would go with him. "On the level, and not peach, not desert him?"—be what he had been looking for all these years, the woman that somehow he felt he had found the moment he caught sight of her standing at bay there in the candle-light? He was quite sober now.

"Yes," she said, burying her face. She would stick by her word. She was enough of a Puritan for that. So Stephen Ghent pulled the chain of nuggets from his neck and bought off the Mexican with that; he and the other man went outside and shot at each other and Ghent came back. While he was dictating a note which Ruth was to leave, telling her brother that she had gone away to be married, Ghent walked across the room and stood with his back to her. He had left his gun beside her

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elbow. She saw it and, trembling, lifted the muzzle slowly to her temple, but the love of life was too strong. "I cannot! I cannot!" she sobbed and buried her face in her arms. Then Ghent took down her saddle and bridle, and, motioning to the door, followed her out into the night.

At first it seemed almost as if this grim bargain might bring a kind of happiness. He treated her with gentleness and a sort of rude chivalry, and when she saw him, strong, sure, riding down into the arroyos and ahead of her through the gaunt canyons, something like an answering confidence and loyalty rose in her own heart.

They came at last to the buried valley in which he had struck gold and settled down to work the claim. And then came the revulsion, and all her Puritanism rushed back and submerged her. All the quintessential bitterness which the "nerves" of the highly organized modern woman could inject into the raw distress of the situation stung her with its whitehot fire. The more he tried to do for her the more hateful he became. Whenever she looked at her husband, behind him she seemed to see

the figure of that drunken animal who had broken into her room. "My price has risen!" she flung out bitterly, when Ghent, in his bashful fashion, let fall the news that he had been planning a fine house for her. It was going to cost, far away as they were from everything, forty thousand dollars. Every cent that he gave her she kept apart, not spending it. While he was working his claim she slaved secretly over Indian baskets and blankets, sold them to tourists, and turned the money over to the Mexican who had sold his share in her for the string of nuggets. And at last, when the debt was paid to the last penny and the chain redeemed, she flung it at her husband's feet and with her brother, who had discovered her at last, went back to the East.

There we see her, in the next and last act, in the old sitting-room, under the grim portraits of her ancestors. The Jordan money has been lost in the ranch venture, Ruth is a mother. And here, presently, in the midst of worry and unrest, Ghent appears. He had followed by the next train, bought the ruined ranch, saved the family, and been waiting his time in the neighborhood. It only twists the

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steel in the wound. "So my price has risen!" Ruth flings out—once he had bought her, now he must buy her family.

Ghent stands up and takes it as he used to during those wretched months in the mountains. "It's those fellows that are fooling you," he says, motioning toward the portraits. Everything wrong in their meeting was burned away—for him—when their eyes first met. He has paid for her not only with a "trumpery chain but with the heart in my breast, do you hear? That's one thing you can't throw back at me—the man you've made of me, the life and the meaning of life you've showed me the way to."

But he knows what she's thinking for all that—"wrong is wrong, from the moment it happens until the crack of doom and all the angels of heaven, working overtime, can't make it less or different by a hair. That seems to be the law. I've learned it hard, but I guess I've learned it. I've seen it written in mountain letters across the continent of this life—Done is done, and lost is lost, and smashed to hell is smashed to hell. We fuss and potter and patch up . . . but it's been a losing game

with you from the first. You belong here and I belong out yonder—beyond the Rockies, beyond—the Great Divide."

And leaning there on the table, her face buried in her arms, the truth comes through to her at last. Out of the sin committed this man has grown steadily stronger and gentler and better; she has grown only narrower and harder and more weak. Wrapping herself in words and hand-me-down conceptions of life and its duties, she has done her best to destroy life, trample under foot its happiness and beauty. He has just begun to live. The wages of sin are suffering and he had suffered, but they are not necessarily death. The moment of sin may be the moment of revelation, of the beginning of a new life. And she rises and takes up the chain of nuggets which he had laid on the table and hangs it round his neck.

When "The Great Divide" was first played by Miss Anglin and Mr. Henry Miller, in the autumn of 1906, it seemed to many that the "great American play" had at last arrived. It had breadth and sweep, both geographical and spiritual, and combined force on the one hand, and lyrical beauty on the other, with

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the satisfying restraint and simplicity of one trained in the use of words. A new sort of American was in the theatre—a scholar who spoke every-day talk, a playwright who could turn melodrama into fine and mounting poetry.

That Mr. Moody was more poet than dramatist was suggested by his next play, "The Faith Healer," with which ended, all too soon, both his work and his life. He was a man of one play, but one of distinguished quality, that deserved to take its place beside the best of Fitch, Augustus Thomas, Bronson Howard, and James A. Herne.

Guessing the probable source of the great American play is a game which each may play to his taste—genius comes when it comes and blows where it listeth. In the small hours of that night at Denver in 1908, when the Democrats nominated Bryan for the third time, somewhere in that delirium of band music, howling, and oratory which dragged on until the dawn came up out of the prairies, Mr. Augustus Thomas arose as a delegate from New York to address the convention. I well remember the sight of that ruddy, bulletheaded face, the cheering sound, after the

strange æolian noises that had preceded them, of those terse authoritative words. The author of "Arizona" fulfilled at that moment, better perhaps than any of our other play-writers could have done, the American notion that the artist should also be a good citizen. And the "great" American play, one suspects, is likely to come from some such type of man—not from the ivory tower nor "Broadway," but closer to the firing line.



XVI

SOME LADIES WHO DANCE



THE helpless victim of an age of steamengines and Broadway musical comedies arrived at the Plaza Hotel at the close of a wintry afternoon when Fifth Avenue was at its brightest and—as the barbarians would say—its best. He was to appear before Miss Isadora Duncan at six o'clock.

Miss Duncan, as it is perhaps needless to explain, is the restorer of the lost art of dancing as it was known in the days when the world was young and the Greek vases were being made. As one of her appreciators has said: "It is far back, deep down in the centuries, that one's spirit passes when Isadora Duncan dances; back to the very morning of the world, when the movements of the human body were one with the wind and sea; when the gesture of a woman's arm was as the unfolding of a rose petal, the pressure of her foot upon the sod, as the drifting of a leaf to earth. Your heart

beats and your eyes are moist and you know that such perfect moments are years apart, even in happy lives.".

"But why?" demanded Miss Duncan wearily. "Why put us together? One has respect for Mademoiselle Genée. She has trained for many years and held an honorable place in her profession. She is an excellent acrobat. But if you are considering an art. . . . And as for some faker who walks around the stage in an imitation Hindoo costume. . . . Wellyou wouldn't write an article about Sir Henry Irving and some knockabout comedian at the music-halls?"

The condemned man hastened to assure Miss Duncan that he would not. He didn't originate the idea. It was the work of a band of editorial conspirators, thinking probably of the absurd public and what it read. Unrelated things were grouped together for purposes of convenience, contrast, goodness knows what, under titles, rough, crude, if you will, yet-

"Anyway," he suggested brightly, "mightn't Sir Henry Irving and the music-hall comedian be grouped—'Different ways of spending an evening!""

Miss Duncan was too bored to reply. Reclining somewhat after the manner of Madame Récamier, she wearily surveyed the spacious and elegant apartment done in the fashion of that age of the Louis in which the hateful art of the ballet originated. At the piano to the left a young Harvard man had just ceased playing the "Œdipus" music of Doctor Paine. To the right sat one of our leading poets wrapped in profound thought. Over her clustered curls Miss Duncan wore a sort of shirred cap or indoor sunbonnet, and softly shimmering drapery fell from the low-cleft neck to the pale-blue sandals, with all that knowledge of form, line, and rhythm which is so exquisitely revealed in her dancing.

Fragonard or Watteau might have preserved some of the unpremeditated beauty of that picture, but it shall not be attempted here. I mention it only because for the first ten or fifteen minutes during which the culprit waited to be discovered it was the only companionship he had. He might have been the paper on the wall—nay, would that he had—for toward that most of the time Miss Duncan lifted absorbed and almost interested eyes.

"They send people to me," and with a sort of wistful despair her eyes drifted for an instant across his huddled form, "who know nothing of dancing, nothing of art, nothing—Why don't they send a sculptor? He might understand what I am aiming at, what I have been working all these years to do. One comes back to one's own country and one hopes for a little sympathy and recognition, and one either isn't noticed at all or you write nothing but twaddle. . . . Yes, there is one person in Philadelphia and one on the Boston Transcript. They write beautifully of my art."

The poet stirred uneasily, and Miss Duncan, inclining slightly in his direction, vouch-

safed a forgiving smile.

"Of course—you . . . But you," and she sighed, "you write beautifully about anything."

Again there was silence, and presently Miss Duncan returned to the consideration of other dancers.

"Three years ago that girl came to my dressing-room with tears in her eyes and begged me to give her a few suggestions—while she was taking notes on my costumes. She knows nothing of dancing, nothing of my art, but

there are millions behind her, she is pushed, she goes to Germany—of course, the Germans understand my work, and she accomplishes nothing but the réclame, and now I understand she is coming over here and your papers will take her up—money can do anything. And here is Loie Fuller—she scrapes up whoever she can find—girls who didn't know there was such a thing as dancing until they began to imitate me five or six years ago. One works for years to perfect some one artistic thing like that of merging one motion into another, but what difference does it make? Who sees it? Nobody understands."

The interviewer, thinking he saw an opening, asked Miss Duncan if she wouldn't point out some of the most obvious things that he wouldn't understand.

"I suppose," answered Miss Duncan wearily "you might begin with architecture. Of course, you have no architecture here——"

"Oh, I don't know," he protested weakly. "It seems to me that—I mean to say——"

"In the last ten years, Isadora," interrupted the poet soothingly. "Really, you know there has been a—a—"

"After all, there's but one art," Miss Dun-

can lifted her hand with fingers slightly outstretched as if to symbolize various branches of art radiating from a central source. "Am I not right?" And she looked for confirmation to the poet, who nodded vigorously. "You go to the Parthenon. That's perfect. It's admitted -it's final-it's there-form, line, rhythm. And that is my dancing. Ask Rodin how much inspiration he would get from a première danseuse standing on the end of her toe? Could you imagine a ballet in the Parthenon. And yet I heard Bach played in the Parthenon." Again Miss Duncan turned to the poet as to one who spoke her own language. "It was quite-quite perfect, you know. The rhythm of the music and the rhythm of the columns-the-

"Yes!" agreed the poet eagerly.

The condemned man pressed his hand to his low but throbbing forehead.

"How, Miss Duncan," he began desperately "did you first happen to begin your work?"

She regarded him with a wan smile.

"I suppose," she sighed, "I wanted to become an artist."

"It was in California, wasn't it?" And the poet, who was very kind really and did all

that he could to help, suggested that it would be enchanting to see her dance under those great redwood trees. "You know them, of course," he hinted, but Miss Duncan made no reply.

"I mean," gasped the outsider, "you have done so much. You have started so many imitators that one would like to know how the

idea came to you."

"I suppose," said Miss Duncan, "it was a curious idea for a mere feminine person to have. Perhaps, for a mere feminine person, I may have had a little intelligence. Doubtless that was quite absurd. Some day a masculine person may take up my work and accomplish something. I haven't the strength. I started a school so that some children might be trained up to carry the art on when I am too old. When they were fifteen they broke their agreements, and now they're dancing all over Europe as 'pupils of Isadora Duncan.' Even the Petersburg ballet imitates me—ah!" Miss Duncan shuddered at the thought. "I do a motion once-like that," and she waved her arms; "they do it-fast-a thousand times!"

"An outrage!" declared the poet.

"One expects—in one's own country—a little recognition——"

"I should think," ventured the condemned man, "that Carnegie Hall yesterday afternoon, packed from orchestra to roof, would be a sort of recognition. . . ."

Miss Duncan sank back, lifted and dropped her hands wearily.

"Oh!" she said. "One always has the audience!"

The visitor staggered to his feet and mumbled a few stumbling words of farewell in which the fatal word "deserve" was used.

"Deserve!" cried Miss Duncan, and the

kindly poet sprang to the rescue again.

"Isadora," he said earnestly, "I don't believe you realize how deep and—and really beautiful—the appreciation of—of your—" but the door closed behind him then and the condemned man was free.

The difference between Mademoiselle Genée's art and Miss Duncan's is the difference between classicism and romanticism—between French heels and sandals or Racine and Shel-

ley, or Louis XIV and the great god Pan. A première danseuse is, so to speak, the priestess of an ancient ritual. There may be doubt as to how well she does certain things, but there is no doubt whatever as to precisely how they should be done.

"People talk about new steps," smiled Miss Genée. "There are no new steps. There can't be. There can be arrangements of steps, but no new ones."

It is a code as fixed as the duello. Even its language is the quaint old French. To those of Miss Duncan's way of thinking it is dead as sheet-iron stencil. And yet if Miss Genée is anything at all she is the embodiment of gayety and unconscious joy. Dramatic reporters of two continents have perished trying to express her inexpressible lightness of movement, the happy flashes of her hands and smile—this spring song in pink slippers, this lark in ballet skirts.

And we come then to the astonishing conclusion that a pinched and academic dance may be danced with a glad Greek spirit, just as a glad Greek dance may, doubtless, be danced with a pinched and academic spirit;

and that joy itself is a matter not merely of form, line, and rhythm, but of the human heart.

Off the stage Miss Genée is a tight little, bright little body, with a very sedate, clean-cut way of talking and a quick, boyish laugh. There are no amethystine twilights about Miss Genée. The only "atmosphere" in her sitting-room the day I was there was the brisk noon sunshine and the cheerful roar of Broadway several stories below. There were a few pictures of her friends on the mantel, a large signed one of Mr. Roosevelt on the piano, and as she rose from her writing-desk in a severely plain blue dress with a high collar she might have been a trim little English governess.

Miss Genée is a Dane and she began to dance when she was nine years old.

"I went to my auntie and uncle then. Nobody on my side of the family had anything to do with dancing or the theatre, but uncle was a teacher of dancing and he had his own theatre in Stettin. Maybe that helped me along, because I was leading a ballet at fifteen. We went to the Royal Theatre in Berlin and then to the opera in Munich, and then I should have

gone to Vienna, but I went to London for six weeks and stayed ten years and—and here I am!"

It was only in 1908 that Mademoiselle Genée's contract expired at the Empire in London and she was able to come over here. In that time she had become almost a British institution, and when she came over again last year Mr. Walkley of the *Times* declared that she ought to hang up her slippers in the British Museum before she went away.

"I'll never stay very long in one place again," she said. "And then—if I get married — Well, I'm not going to go on dancing after I'm an old lady—but I'm quite an old lady now!" And she laughed her gay, boyish laugh, sitting up very straight above her high collar.

Now to an artist of Miss Duncan's school the important thing must naturally be not only form, line, and rhythm, but the feeling which these express; the most important thing to a première danseuse is her muscles. To one, you might say, it is the condition of her soul; to the other the condition of her big toe. And it takes a long time to make a première danseuse.

Stand with your heels together and your feet turned out until they are in the same straight line—like clock hands pointing to quarter past nine o'clock. When you can do this and wave your arms gracefully and smile—and not fall over backward or forward—you have learned one of the first tricks of the ballet dancer's technic. For this ability to keep the feet parallel to the audience instead of pointed at it makes much of the difference between what is considered good and bad ballet dancing.

When Mademoiselle Genée's feet "twinkle" in the air, for instance, she isn't, as your eye may suggest, merely hitting her heels together several times before coming down. She is doing an entrechat, which consists in weaving the feet in and out, so to speak, while both are in the air and parallel to the audience. Two beats, one out, one in, of such a weaving is a simple entrechat; three an entrechat à trois, and so on. If the feet and legs were pointed at the audience the neat effect would be spoiled, even were it possible to do it in that way. Very few dancers, men or women, can do the entrechat huit. After you have tried a simple entrechat and kicked yourself, you have a notion of the dexterity it

takes. Genée does it with a laugh, as easily as you would twiddle your fingers.

She doesn't show in her ordinary walk that she is a ballet dancer. "But I remember an old teacher in Germany," she said; "I hadn't met him, but I knew him the minute I saw him on the street. There he was tramping down-town in the second position!" The second position is the one in which you turn your feet out to six o'clock.

This turning out of the feet is important again when the dancer walks on the tips of her toes. When Genée blows down to the footlights on the ends of her slippers her legs are as neatly folded as a pair of scissors—she would look awkward and absurd if her feet were pointed at the audience and a foot or so apart, as they would be in standing naturally.

"And yet if you watch your ballet dancers you will find that most of them do do that, more or less. And they bend their knees, too"—and Miss Genée came waddling forward like an ambitious and rather jocular duck. "Of course"—and she threw up her hands—"that isn't dancing." And there's the high-arched instep the dancer must start with and the years

of training and constant practice to keep in condition.

"Two hours every day," laughed Miss Genée. "Of course, these girls who learn to dance after they're grown up think it's a bore and too hard, but I've done it all my life and I'd miss it if I didn't have it. And I don't believe that the art of the ballet is dead. Of course, when Miss Isadora Duncan says that we only began with Louis XIV, while her art goes back twenty-five hundred years, you can't say anything to that. I dare say it does. Ballet dancing isn't always graceful, but I think it can be made so. They ask me why I do the grande ronde" (I think that was the phrase; it is the long tiptoe circuit of the stage). "Well, I do that for just the same reason that the tenor in the opera ends the act with a high note. There's no reason why he should. He does it to show that he can do it, and the people wouldn't be satisfied if he didn't."

There is, of course, no particular reason for many things in ballet dancing except that people happen to like to see them done. And while it would be unfortunate if one had to stop feel-

ing like a Christian in order to dance like a Greek, it is undoubtedly true that Miss Duncan's dancing rests on a sounder notion of art.

Miss Ruth St. Denis belongs to still another school. It is her own, and she and her indefatigable mother thought it up and worked it out themselves. Miss St. Denis's dances are a combination of picturesque stage effects and the movements of an unusually lithe and graceful body. Interested by the sight of the real Orientals with whom Miss St. Denis has surrounded herself, and half drugged with incense, the spectator certainly gets the feeling that she comes from east of Suez; and as long as the result is pleasing I can't see that it makes the slightest difference whether she really does or not.

Indeed, original and beautiful as she is, I am not sure that the most interesting thing about this young American girl isn't what she has accomplished rather than what she dances. She may or may not do this or that, but her kind of pluck and perseverance is what tames wildernesses and slays dragons.

It's a long, long way from Somerville, N. J.,

to India, but what with reading books in libraries and watching queer Hindus at Coney Island, this girl succeeded for her own purposes in making the journey. It's a long way from a music-hall turn or even a pas seul in somebody's else's play to Alma Tadema's studio and matinées of your own; but, unaided and alone, you might say, she did that, too.

When the temple dance lends and the awakened image of Radha—an ivory-white figure decorated rather than clothed with jewels—becomes stone again, you might think that if you went round behind the scenes you would find some languid houri smoking a green cigarette. What you do find is a tall, brisk, tailor-made American girl with straight gray eyes, crisp, vigorous speech, and a lively interest in what other people are doing. Except for an unusual litheness and a way of moving, which Miss Duncan's admirers might describe as "that old Delsarte stuff," she might have just stepped off the campus of some Western university.

Her mother, indeed, did study medicine at Ann Arbor, and it is this gray-haired lady in the little black bonnet—always a little absent-minded because of having so many things on her mind at once—who more or less steers everything, from planning the different dances and seeing that Ruthie is bundled off after the matinée, so that she won't talk herself weary before the evening, to meeting reporters and handling the Hindu gentlemen.

I had made up droll histories for these worthies, who, I imagined, had never been nearer India than Twenty-ninth Street and Sixth Avenue, and I was rather grieved to find that they were real.

"That nice old gentleman with the square beard," said Mrs. St. Denis, "used to be a postmaster in India. He's a pensioner now. We picked him up in England. And the tall one who guards the door in the temple scene used to run a liberal newspaper. They all live in a flat and cook their own meals. Pop—come over here and talk to this gentleman." And the benign old fellow obediently trotted over and showed me a note-book with a poem called "Forget Me Not" copied in it in his own almost microscopic but perfect hand.

Sitting in a wooden chair beside the electriclight switches, while a vaudeville team prac-

tised a waltz song on the empty stage and the Hindus, looking much chillier in their American clothes than they did during the dances in almost nothing at all, stared into space, Mrs. St. Denis told something of their story. She was a Yankee, she said, a New England Yankee, and she supposed it was their faith which had kept them going. I asked if she belonged to any particular religious sect.

"No," said Mrs. St. Denis, "I just mean believing that things will turn out right if you work hard enough and keep going. There is a verse in the last chapter of Habakkuk—that's a book in the Old Testament—which always seemed to help me. An old lady in a Methodist church told it to me: 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat, yet the Lord God is my strength and He will make my feet like hinds' feet and He will make me to walk upon mine high places."

The octogenarian stage-door tender here asked Mrs. St. Denis to make room for the vaudevillians, and she did so, remarking, however, that she and Ruthie had had to rehearse

many times under much worse conditions than that. Well, Ruthie was a great out-of-door girl when she was a child. Then she learned to dance, and finally got a place in Mrs. Carter's company. One day on the road in the West, when things were looking pretty blue, she saw a lithograph in a window advertising cigarettes, and quick as a flash the idea came.

She had always been interested in the East. And now they dug into the Astor Library and talked with queer Orientals at Coney Island, and after a time planned out the temple dance very much as it is done now. They peddled it up and down Broadway, but the managers only shook their heads, until finally they got a chance at a down-town music-hall. Then some nice people became enough interested to arrange a matinée at a regular theatre. It was a great success, and the whole family went abroad to make Ruthie's fortune.

She danced in London, Paris, and Germany, and one evening in Alma Tadema's studio before the King.

And here they are—mother, father, and brother always are on the stage helping the daughter—back in their own country. The

awkward duckling of Somerville, N. J., has become this strange exotic creature of the East. She weaves her lithe body and ripples her arms—and they do ripple—over braziers of incense. With two green gems for eyes on each hand she does a cobra dance in an Indian street. Then she dances before the rajahs—our old friends, the postmaster and the liberal editor—in shimmering skirts and jingling bracelets and rings. She goes into the desert and attains Samadhi, and then comes the temple dance, already spoken of.

I suppose Miss St. Denis would much rather have people talk about her art and mysticism and Yogis and Samadhis and what it all means. For she really is interested in the East, and actually prefers to take tea at Vantine's. "She just is the East," her friends say, and I presume they know. Certainly she is wonderfully picturesque and graceful.

But the stage is crowded with picturesque and graceful people and things. Girls who have brains and originality enough to make their own ideas, and pluck enough to make their own success, are not so common. And it may cheer up a bit some of those who are trying, to

think of the lithograph in the cigar-store window and the tomboy out in Somerville, N. J., and then remember the portrait by the Austrian artist and the dance before the King and the line of automobiles waiting in the rain on a matinée afternoon, all the way from the door of the Hudson Theatre up to Sixth Avenue.

February, 1910.



XVII

THE NEW DRAMA AND DRURY LANE



"We want no more attempts to dress out the simple dignity of everyday life in the peacock's feathers of false lyricism; no more straw-stuffed heroes or heroines; no more rabbits and goldfish from the conjurer's pockets, nor any limelight. Let us have starlight, moonlight, sunlight, and the light of our own self-respects."—Mr. Galsworthy, "Platitudes Concerning the Drama," 1912.

"We have been spoiled with the exclusive and all-devouring drama of everyday life; where, instead of the fictitious half-believed personages of the stage (the phantoms of old comedy) we recognize ourselves, our brothers, aunts, kinsfolk, allies, patrons, enemies—the same as in life—with an interest in what is going on so hearty and substantial, that we cannot afford our moral judgment in its deepest and most vital results to compromise or slumber for a moment. . . . I confess for myself that (with no great delinquencies to answer for) I am glad for a season to take an airing beyond the diocese of the strict conscience—I come back to my cage and self-restraint the fresher and more healthy for it."—"Essays of Elia," 1822.

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ACCORDING to Mr. Galsworthy three courses are open to the serious dramatist. He may give the public the views and codes of life by which it lives and in which it believes. He may give it those by which he lives and in which he believes, or he may merely set down, as faithfully as may be, things as he sees them, selected and combined, but not distorted, and leave the public to draw its own conclusions.

In "The Pigeon," which was played at the Little Theatre, New York, in the spring of 1912, we saw this last course pursued. To many it might seem scarcely a play at all. The author merely said, in effect—here are some human beings and this is the way they act. Here, for instance, is this soft-hearted artist person, Christopher Wellwyn, who gives money to every beggar who asks for it and then gives his card, too, and tells them to hunt him up if they need help. Of course they come soon enough. They sleep in all his spare rooms, borrow all his clothes, and, after all, his kindness seems to do little good. The brokendown old cabby only goes and gets drunk again; the vagabond Frenchman, with his

quick understanding, snatches of philosophy, and determination not to be exploited by the bourgeoisie, is soon as desperate as ever. The pretty, pleasure-loving, weak-mouthed Mrs. Megan, who sells flowers and won't live with her husband, no sooner gets rested and fed than she's out and into trouble again.

If the old cabman, with his hearty British hatred of "aliens," were but in a slightly different material husk, people would find him a "fine old-fashioned gentleman, carrying his liquor well." The young Frenchman would be a traveller, a graceful amateur, with a "soul above mere trade." The flower girl would be "that charming Mrs. So-and-So, so light-hearted, chic, full of the joie de vivre."

Unfortunately, luck didn't do that for them. And here they are, "rotters" all, as the artist's crisp, practical young daughter puts it. He might better stop helping them and take care of himself, but even he, it appears, is not his own master. "If I've got to give up feeling nice here," says he, tapping himself on the chest, "then I don't know what I am going to do. I'll just have to sit with my head in a bag!" It is stronger than he is—as is drink for the

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cabman, soft, pleasant things for Mrs. Megan, and, for the Frenchman, the open road.

In come some of the artist's friends—a justice of the peace, a professor, a clergyman. They are more stiff-necked, with vigorous theories as to what should be done. The J. P. is all for old-fashioned individualism. What these people want is a shock—wake 'em up to some sense of responsibility, help the deserving and the devil take the hindmost! The professor, on the other hand, is for modern, scientific teamwork, for "giving the State all we can spare so that the undeserving may be made deserving." And each gentleman is so sure that he can make the other see the light if he will give him but a minute's time that they bustle off the stage in a gale of their own argument.

The flower girl goes out to service—"an excellent place"—the clergyman beams with great satisfaction, only to find out a little later that "she's got the footman into trouble." The Frenchman goes to an institution—"a palace," says he, after his escape; "one may eat on the floor," but it appears that there's something which scientific management, sanitation, and germless food will not reach—

"there is in some human souls, Monsieur, what cannot be made tame" . . .

Mrs. Megan, in a burst of despair, finally jumps into the river, but even this stiffening of will is short-lived. The water is cold, it gets into her mouth, she's sorry she did it, and thinks in that sharp moment "of her baby that died—an' dancin'—an'"—in short, the policeman drags her out before she can drown. And then, everybody believing and having said that it would be much better for her if she could die, she is lugged off to court to be punished for attempting suicide.

It was Christmas Eve when these waifs came together in the artist's studio. It is April Fool's Day when they are seen for the last time, and Mr. Wellwyn, having tipped three times instead of once the men who are moving his household effects to a new studio, whose address his daughter intends the derelicts shall not know, of course ends by secretly giving his card to all three again.

Nothing is "proved," and the author ventures no personal opinion except a certain implied criticism of institutionalism which ignores the individual's need of "being himself."

There is no plot; characters merely come and go. One could imagine Mr. Agustus Thomas, who watched proceedings the opening night with great interest from a third-row seat, inwardly observing: "All very well, my dear fellow, but suppose you leave this nice little room and this sympathetic family party and fly your pigeon against the jumbled-up and more or less bone-headed collection of listeners which fills the average theatre?"

Such a question is pertinent, but it is precisely in escaping some of the mechanical difficulties which the dramatist must generally surmount that the small theatre performs its special service and gives a chance for work like this, which, ineffective as it might be as a rough-and-ready theatrical machine, is six times more worth hearing than the average play.

It is difficult to convey the lively and continuous charm of the piece as played by a capable company—its vigorous freshness and rich humor, the sense the spectator constantly got of listening to the real thing. Of course, by humor one doesn't mean mere quotable "lines," but that more suggestive humor which

springs from the general irony of things—the grim contrasts between humans and the vast forces which swirl them about. The brokendown old cabby, helpless, hopeless, drunk as a lord, lurching out to heaven knows what, and mumbling cheerfully as he disappears, "Where to, mister?" is an example. So are the two theorists, stumbling over him as—still talking—they hurry out. The individual is not taken account of in their reckoning. Or the Frenchman, struggling to describe that "something which cannot be made tame"—"You English are so—so civilized."

"The Pigeon" is a well-nigh perfect example of Mr. Galsworthy's austere and self-denying art—of the play in which plot is hung to character instead of character to plot, in which actions spring inevitably from temperament and what has gone before, where none of the people of the play say things for the sake of saying them, and the dialogue, "hand-made, like good lace, furthers with each thread the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated." Plainly a very different sort of art from the topical patchwork of the average play-carpenter, however skilful,

and not incorrectly called "new," although the gentle Elia, as the quotation at the beginning of these remarks will suggest, was lamenting the "new" realistic drama that made one think of one's self and one's relatives, nearly a century ago.

The "new" drama is but part of the general radical, reforming movement of recent years. It has sprung up in many forms since Ibsen began smashing idols a generation ago, but the prophets of each, whether realists like Mr. Galsworthy, or lyricists like the Irishmen Yeats and Synge, have this in common—they are all trying to get away from the false, desiccated, the formal, and back to what seems to each the real thing.

In our country the new drama has brought forward no definite spokesman as yet, although echoes of Ibsen's technic, Shaw's antiromantic fireworks, the feminism in the air, are everywhere heard. In England, however, plays like "Justice," "Strife," "The Pigeon," "Rutherford and Son," "Hindle Wakes," with their undeniable force and their common tendency to disdain theatrical claptrap and stand up to the facts, as Mr. Shaw

would say, have appeared in sufficient numbers to make something very like a new school of play-writing.

The authors of all these plays employ a quiet technic; depend on the force of truth rather than of noise, and the creation of an illusion of every-day life so complete that the spectator actually lives, for the time being, the life of those on the stage. To these dramatists the theatre is not a place to see other people play a game according to certain rules, as one goes to the Polo Grounds to see the Giants play baseball, but a sort of extension of one's real life. One does not there escape from life so much as enter into it—see it more clearly and feel it more poignantly. And along with this, of course, goes a good deal of approval of the individual's right to "live his own life" and determine his course in any set of circumstances according to his own judgment instead of according to what the world may say. The contrast to old-fashioned conventions is especially noticeable in the case of women and their right to think and act for themselves.

Thus in Mr. Stanley Houghton's "Hindle Wakes," which sets forth in much the same

realistic but non-committal fashion as "The Pigeon" the effects on all concerned of the betrayal (if such it may be called) of a Lancashire mill girl by the son of her employer, the girl refuses to marry the man after every one has finally been brought to the conclusion that he must "do the right thing." She knew what she was doing as well as he, and wants no more of the whining cad who had dazzled her for a day. She has a trade and as long as there are mill-wheels turning in Lancashire she can shift for herself.

A similar position was taken by the young Indiana woman in Mr. David Graham Phillips's play "The Merit of a Woman," produced in this country a few years ago.

The new drama in Ireland has meant not only a general return to nature but a specific return to Irish nature—to Irish scenes, speech, ways of thinking and feeling, and—when interpreted by the Irish Players—to acting as near as possible a reproduction of the unpremeditated motions and talk of Irish peasants unacquainted with the conventions of theatres and towns.

The very determination to be simple though

the skies fall involves a certain amount of pose which the prophets of the Irish literary revival have not always escaped. I think one feels this in some of Mr. Yeats's plays—feels that he is a trifle too set on getting away from our sordid world, that a stouter imagination might take it as it is and make something out of it after all. This is likely to be the trouble with such dramatized wistfulness as "The Land of Heart's Desire"—at least as it comes across the footlights.

He is on firmer ground in "Cathleen ni Hoolihan." Here, as a young man is about to be married, a withered hag knocks at the cottage door. She typifies Ireland. The family give her a seat by the fire, and in answer to their questions, she hints at her tragic story—how her lands have been taken away from her by strangers, how many men have died in the effort to regain them. "You must have had much trouble," they say. "Few have had more than I." They offer food and money. It is not that she wants. Those only can help who will give her themselves. "Lovers I've had," she croons, "many men have died for me." She rises to take up her weary journey. There

is cheering in the distance. The French—it is in the times of 1798—have landed. The young man rises, too, his eyes on her. In the doorway she turns to repeat that those who have red cheeks now will have pale ones before they have done serving her. His bride rushes in and entreats him to stay, but he follows and disappears. The appeal of this is straight and true—true of all patriotism as well as that of Ireland.

It is interesting to contrast with it the play of another of the new Irish dramatists—Mr. Lennox Robinson's "Patriots." Both were trying, doubtless in their different manners, to get away from the conventional stage Irishman—the sentimental Boucicault type on the one hand, the vulgar buffoon with green whiskers on the other—and back to something genuine and true. Mr. Yeats, a poet, finds this in an allegory in which the soul of his country, as it were, takes form and speaks. Mr. Robinson, a satirical realist, shows how absurd the traditional Irish patriotism may become in the face of modern facts.

The Nugent brothers are busy with the affairs of the "league" when the play opens. A

league of fighters once—of passwords, hidden stores of arms, quick blows in the dark-it has become a sort of rural lyceum and lecture bureau. We hear James Nugent, a fussy old muffin who might be the editor of some desiccated literary review, or secretary of a suburban drama discussion society, chattering complacently of the league's progress. There is to be a lecture—very, very interesting— "With a Camera through the Apennines" and another, rather daring but most significant, on the nationalization of the Irish railways. We see their sister Ann-wife of the league's old fighting leader, James O'Mahoney, in prison these eighteen years—and her crippled daughter. A very Joan of Arc, side by side with her husband in the old days, she never mentions him or them now without a strange coldness and hardness-but she has made their grocery the most successful in the district. The change that has come over things—the new prosperity and the disinclination foolishly to stir up trouble, the gradual wearing away of the old spirit of revolt under the constant drip of English concessions—"sops," O'Mahoney would have called them—all this is revealed

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with sympathy and penetrating satire. Then comes the thunderbolt. James has been released from prison and is coming back.

He comes unchanged, except in years, to this world grown away from him. To the ingratiating explanations of his brothers-in-law about the thriving condition of the league he interposes: "How many arms—how many rifles—have you got?" His wife, hardened and faded, if not broken, looks back almost with horror to the wild days when, fascinated by his passionate enthusiasm, she threw her whole youth and strength into the hopeless cause.

The change in every one only spurs the old leader to new zeal—he had feared that he would not be needed, and now he finds that he is needed more than ever. So he calls a meeting at the village hall. Two young fellows of the new generation look in before he arrives, but, finding out what is on, languidly shake their heads and go to the moving-picture show. When O'Mahoney arrives there is no one to listen to him. The old war-horse determines then to move on to Dublin, where some of the old spirit must still survive, and the

crippled daughter declares she will go with him. The mother interposes, and in the violent moment which follows reveals the secret which has stood between them during his prison years—the daughter was born a cripple because of the shock to the mother when O'Mahoney, thinking only of escaping arrest, had fought his pursuers from the very room where she was lying. This breaks O'Mahoney down at last. He has killed men, maimed his own child, spent the best of his life in prison, and what has he accomplished, after all? To build up a new life as best he may, he staggers out, leaning on his wife's arm, followed by the absurd brothers-in-law. The canny old janitor watches them depart, turns down the lights, looks at his watch. "It's only quarter after eight," says he. "There's time to see the movin' pictures vet!"

All through, the author is fair to both sides. The brothers-in-law are piffling and ridiculous, the wife hard, yet in their regard for peace, and hatred of hopeless revolt, they have all the common sense, and perhaps something more, on their side. The intransigent O'Mahoney is an archaic nuisance in the environ-

ment to which he returns, yet his bigness and nobility cannot be escaped. Here is a chance for satire—the interplay of these two types, both so fairly put, and at bottom so tragic—with life and body to it. A play so apparently artless, and yet at once so droll and searching, is not encountered every day.

I suppose these two plays might be said to represent those two eyes which, according to Mr. Shaw, an Irishman possesses. With one he sees that a dream is beautiful, with the other that it is a dream. In other words, he has a keen sense of reality, but with it an intellectual detachment which permits him to play with a fanciful idea for the fun of playing with it.

Synge illustrates this in his "Playboy of the Western World." He, too, was trying to get away from the conventional stage Irishman and he took his audience to a remote poverty-stricken village, there to play for a moment with the idea of the Irish passion for eloquence, the impatience with a youth who has "no savagery or fine words in him at all."

Christy Mahon—the playboy—is full of "fine words and savagery," and out of a row

with an ugly father and the villagers' thirst for something thrilling, he is soon making himself a hero. And no wonder when you hear him talk. "What call have you to be lonesome," asks Pegeen, who tends bar, "when there's poor girls walking Mayo in their thousands now?"

"It's well you know what call I have. It's a lonesome thing to be passing small towns with the lights shining sideways when the night is down, or going in strange places with a dog nosing before you and a dog nosing behind, or drawn to the cities where you'd hear a voice kissing and talking deep love in every shadow of the ditch, and you passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from your heart. . . ."

But the girl fears that he'll soon be leaving her for some girl in his own land. "Starting from you, is it?" says Christy. "I will not, then, and when the airs is warming in four months or five, it's then yourself and me should be pacing Neifin in the dews of night, the times sweet smells do be rising, and you'd see a little shiny new moon, maybe, sinking on the hills." And so he talks on, feeling almost "a kind of pity for the Lord God of all ages sitting lonesome in his golden chair," until Pegeen cries at last: "And myself, a girl, was tempted often to go sailing the seas till I'd marry a Jewman with ten kegs of gold, and I not knowing at all there was the like of you drawing near, like the stars of God."

And then, in the middle of everything, in tramps old Mahon himself, not killed in the least, ready to take his wild young "playboy" home and thrash him. The heroic bubble breaks. The men folks are relieved—they'll have peace now with their drinks. But Pegeen, her dream shattered, is looking out the door as the curtain falls. "Oh, my grief!" she's crying, and in her voice all youth's wild regret, "I've lost the only Playboy in the Western World!"

It must have been the lack of the Irishman's two eyes which caused some of our transplanted Irishmen to bombard Mr. Synge's poetry with eggs and potatoes. They must otherwise have seen that, instead of suggesting that Irishmen were fond of murdering their fathers, he was but a poet saturated in peasant lore and peasant talk, trying to get away from the cold formalism of sophisticated art to

simpler, wilder things, and merely taking the idea of village narrowness and thirst for excitement and for a moment playing with it.

It is the song in his lines, the flavor and fragrance, the wild wistfulness—this, and not dramatic quality as the ordinary actor or stage-manager understands it—which makes Synge's work so fine and rare. He deliberately set out to find these things—"speech fully flavored as a nut or an apple"—and buried himself away from the "modern literature of towns" as a prospector buries himself away in the mountains in search of pure gold.

And it was gold he brought back, so pure and fine that one does not question its source. This cannot always be said of the new Irish play-writers. As soon as the spectator begins to be bored—and the outsider, not sharing the patriotic zeal which inspires their efforts, occasionally is bored—he begins to question this business of deserting one's previous experience and speech and adopting the speech and ideas of peasants in order to be natural and simple. All very well in its way, says he, and quaint and amusing, but, after all, something of a pose.

There is no such questioning in the case of Synge. Such a little tragic masterpiece as "Riders to the Sea," for instance, holds the spectator as do few things in the theatre. Not more than a half-hour long, played in a bare cottage interior with a window looking on the sea, it becomes, as interpreted by the Irish players, pure poetry, unmarred by author's or actor's artifice. Speech and action are merged into a sort of crooning music. It is less a play than a dirge, moaning through the cold sea fog and the dull crash of the surf.

"Riders to the Sea" and "The Playboy" may seem very different from "The Pigeon" or "Hindle Wakes," and of course the Synge plays belong to what Mr. Galsworthy calls that "twisting and delicious stream of poetry" down which he thinks that part of the English drama of the future will flow, while the other part—to which his own plays belong—flows in the "broad and clear-cut channel of naturalism."

Yet all four of these plays, like others of the "new" drama, have this in common—they are faithful to something the author has genuinely lived, or perceived, or felt, and the spectator

is expected to view them in a similar mood, as an interpretation or an extension, so to speak, of his own life and thought. He becomes part of the play instead of standing outside and looking at it as one watches a conjurer or acrobat. "We want no more limelight," as Mr. Galsworthy puts it, "let us have starlight, moonlight, sunlight and the light of our own self-respects."

With this statement of artistic faith most of us, I think, will readily agree. Such is the intention of all the drama of our time, however fantastic its exterior, which may really be taken seriously. In this direction lies all chance of growth.

There might be no qualifications to such a programme were it true that the playgoer is always ready, as the new drama demands he shall be, to take part in the play; to think, talk, and move with the persons he sees thinking, talking, and moving on the stage, recognize among them not only his relatives but himself, and co-operate for a few hours with the avid dramatist in the exploitation, analysis—and possible enrichment—of his own existence.

But he is not always ready. His mind is no more forever hungry for nourishment than his body is for food. There are seasons when he has no wish to take part in the play, when, indeed, he asks—nay, wails—to be permitted to lock a door on himself and his responsible life and be wafted away to the blessed isles.

May this boon never be vouchsafed? Must he always be himself, think, have opinions, never escape from weighing truth and deciding 'twixt right and wrong? We are radicals in the morning and conservatives in the afternoon, as somebody has said, yet the playgoer must sustain his radicalism till the evening, always be ready to grow, to advance, never sink blissfully back in his orchestra seat, confident that in the world he is about to enter everything is decided beforehand and guided by a higher power.

Mr. Galsworthy, arguing for the austere, finely chiselled drama of character, laments the fate of characters in the more conventional play—impaled on a row of stages, so to speak, "characters who would have liked to live, but came to untimely grief; who started bravely, but fell on these stakes, placed beforehand in a row, and were transfixed one by one, while their ghosts stride on, squeaking and gibbering through the play. The demand for a good

plot commonly signifies 'tickle my sensations by stuffing the play with arbitrary adventures, so that I need not be troubled to take the character seriously. Set the persons of the play to action, regardless of time, sequence, atmosphere, and probability!""

All this is very true, yet in holding out for his stern ideal he chooses to ignore for the moment that people now and then demand in the theatre the pleasure of "play" in its literal sense, of making the stage conventions a sort of game which all concerned conduct with straight faces, like children with their make-believe. The polished villain of Drury Lane melodrama is impaled on a stake, to be sure, and there is precisely the fun of the thing. Everybody knows from fond experience just how he will tap his cigarette case and say "Curses!" And when he does these things exactly as he has always done them, the spectator is made happy.

The villainess of real life or of the new drama does not ring a bell, so to speak, when she comes. She sometimes makes virtue unattractive and vice heroic and desirable, insinuates herself through one's better nature, so to speak, and makes one puzzled and uncomfortable. These "inside" modern villainesses are no fun at all. But the outside, visual ones of melodrama, with their lowering picture hats, vermilion lips, and languishing eyes—their signs, as it were, "This Way to the Villainess"—how simple and comfortable! So heap on the horrors! Writhe, O lovely heroine, and demand if fate is forever to be unkind! Look ever nobler, O gallant hero, and more completely self-sacrificing! Glitter and sneer, O scarlet villainess, and weave thy accursed webs! This isn't life, nor "criticism of life," nor some diabolically penetrating Ibsen thing that will not be shaken off even when we emerge into Longacre Square and the clear winter night. This is play.

Imagine, if you please—after a course of Strindberg matinées—a stage, wide, high, and full of people. His Majesty's transport, Beachy Head, crowded with troops, is outward bound to "Gib." It is a foggy night and the siren breaks hoarsely into the dialogue every few sentences—with real steam. Observe the captain and his first officer on the bridge anxiously scanning the murk with their glasses—the blue sputter of the wireless—the lovely ladies, officers' wives no doubt, on the deck

below—the troops in khaki crowding the main deck.

And who is this handsome dark young man whose uniform fits him so much better than the others?—"By the set of those shoulders, my man, you have taken the Queen's shilling before," observes the suspicious officer—who, indeed, but our young friend Sir Dorian March? To save a lady's honor he became last night the innocent custodian of a stolen coronet, overcame innumerable constables, swam the river at Windsor, dived over the waterfall, and now has enlisted to escape disgrace.

"Bray-y-y-y-y!" goes the siren again. Bluer and more nervous is the sputter of the wireless. It is a message from ashore, and poor Sir Dorian is discovered.

The detail is marched out. Dorian is accused. Mr. Norris, the rich pawnbroker from whom the coronet was stolen by Lady Marion Beaumont, is near to death, it seems, from the morphine which that harassed lady gave him. Sir Dorian must answer for murder when he gets to shore. "I would not interfere," says the colonel, "if you saw fit to jump overboard and make an end of yourself, Dorian March!" And then—crash! The ship has struck the rocks

and is sinking. All is confusion, shrieks, and wailing, but it is Dorian March who seizes the Union Jack, and with a "Let's die like men!" stands in the spot-light with the troops about him as the *Beachy Head* goes down.

It's a grand sight, and we keep on applauding and applauding, because each time the curtain rises the ingenious stage mechanism has made the ship sink a little lower, and if we applaud long enough, maybe we can sink it, funnels and all!

Yes, this is play, and villainy can no more harm a hair of Sir Dorian's constantly imperilled head—we are seeing "The Sins of Society"-than Captain Greville Sartoris and wicked Mrs. D'Aguila can keep the best horse from winning in "The Whip." Yet we can somehow contrive—so vivid are the attacks on eye and ear-constantly to be fearful of their fates. And as the express-train roars down to Newmarket through the night and wicked Sartoris-how superbly lithe and handsome he is!-creeps along the running-board and uncouples the car in which the beautiful racehorse is locked, in the path of the approaching train; as the train roars nearer and the trackman waves his frantic red lantern and the fin-

ger of a far-off motor's search-light begins to waver across the countryside—Lady Di to the rescue!—must the childlike delight in scenes like this be sternly civilized away?

Not without something more than a regretful sigh—indirectly expressed every time a really well-made piece of this sort comes along and an army of enchanted spectators promptly springs from the city pavements to crowd the largest house in town for months on end. It is a wonderful sight, a wonderful thing to play to. Fancy being the villain in the traditional march in front of the curtain after the third act, stopping half-way across in a gale of ecstatic hisses, slowly taking out a cigarette, lighting it, and saying "Ha!" to a crowd like that.

The sense of play and make-believe in which the whole is conceived is proved by the convention that the villain must be the handsomest of men. We want no shabby, sneaking meannesses—to remind us, perhaps, of our own—but a liveried Satan who does his villainy proudly and with an air. In "The Whip," I remember, the hero was played by an unknown youth whom none would have turned to look at in a crowd—his virtue had to do for him—while Captain Sartoris was a Greek god

and a tailor's dream. How gracefully fit and guardsman-like was Mr. Cyril Keightly as "Recky" Poole in that well-written, wellacted and wholly artificial piece "The Little Damozel" a few years ago—a tall, beautiful, bored young man who would do the most abominable things with a winsome seriousness which made them seem for the moment not only plausible but mournfully inevitable. And who that saw him will forget Mr. W. L. Abingdon—one of our most accomplished villains in "The Sins of Society"? His fine, rich voice, his precise and courteous accent; the way he would saunter in, rising the least bit on his toes with each step, and move up stage away from Lady Marion, turn, lean on the garden-seat, take out his cigarette box, snap it together and tap it with the end of his cigarette-all like a piece of smooth, delightful clockwork.

Clockwork he was, indeed, and therein lies much of his and of melodrama's jolly charm. From a world foggy, drab, mixed-up, and puzzling, we come into one all straight black and white, where 2+2 make 4. There is the same difference between the villains of melodrama and the villains of life as between the personal devil of orthodox religion, whom we need only

dodge as we would dodge a trolley-car, and the devil of the rationalist, which consists of the weaknesses and temptations inside his own head and must be fought all the time. The comfort of melodrama, indeed, is that of orthodoxy—the world is romantic and yet secure, we go through fire and water, yet know all the time that we are going to be saved.

Far from not being staked, the characters in this sort of play must be staked for the spectator's full delight. There must be no doubt, no weak human quiver in their perfect artificiality. For the semirealistic horrors of a "Madame X," for instance, to which people go as to a murder trial or execution and are carried out in hysterics, I, at least, have no taste. This is a sort of hybrid which we might very well do without. If we are going to be harrowed, let it be done by one of these diamond-pointed moderns, who enlighten as well as hurt, not by archaic butchers of the physical nerves.

There are other sorts of hybrid drama we might very well do without—the Belasconian wizardry, for instance—sawdust insides masked by photographic exteriors, the spot-

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light turned on the ingénue's well-turned neck as she lisps her maiden's prayer.

We can get along very well without what Mr. Galsworthy calls "bastard" drama, when that means the hybrid joining of unrelated things, or faking and insincerity. Sunlight and starlight are best, of course, but we have not quite done with limelight, provided we know clearly it is limelight, nor—for an occasional vacation—with the restful old characters tied to their stakes.

In the lighter sort of play, this stake tying must always, indeed, be the resource of those more gifted with wit and stage facility than the habit of original and illuminating thought. In Pinero's middle-aged but still delightful comedy, "The Amazons," for instance, two of the characters are scarcely more than catchwords in human shape. Tweenways, the absurd little sprig of nobility, with his complacent "We don't do so and so," and the impossible Frenchman, forever protesting how English he is-"French by birth, yes! But English to ze back-bone! I play your sport, I speak your language, I am all English to ze back-bone, damn it all!"—these are utterly stagy, yet fresh and amusing always, because in a light

and unpretentious way they embody a large general truth.

Mr. Pinero wrote "The Amazons" long before he was knighted, or had been driven by the changing dramatic fashions to go in for "relentless realism" and his own brand of new drama-when he was still a mere light man of the theatre. If he were writing of Frenchmen or decadent aristocrats to-day he would probably try to be much more penetrating and elaborate, and very likely end in being merely stodgy and uninspired. In climbing the hill of Helicon every man, it seems, must go his own pace. That which he does naturally seems to have a vitality and strength he cannot achieve by trying to pull himself up by his boot-straps into some other man's gait. And the light man of the theatre, or of any other place, will often be more likely to say something worth hearing if he continue with his lightness than if he pull a long face and try to talk like a philosopher.







